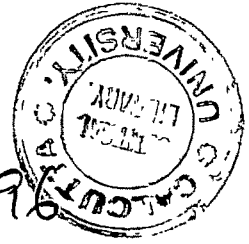


# BULLETIN

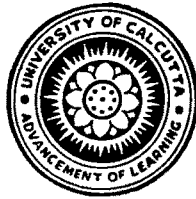
of the  
Department of English



CUG - H00387-3 - 286996



82  
13 8711



University of Calcutta

Vol. 3 : 1 & 2  
1961-62

*Editor*  
Dr. S. C. SEN

*Rupees Two Only*

## CONTENTS

S. C. SEN	...	... Four Quartets	...	...
P. C. GHOSH	...	... Samson Agonistes ✓	...	12
BINA SENGUPTA	...	... Wordsworth's Nature Poetry	...	25
M. K. SEN	...	... The Political Writings of Robert Lynd	...	36
SUBHASH SARKAR	...	... Imagery in Eliot's Poetry	...	4
L. H.	...	... Reviews	...	49

---

The Bulletin of the Department of English is an organ for higher studies by teachers of English in colleges under the University of Calcutta.

No payments are made for articles, reviews, etc.

Books for review and contributions are to be sent to the Editor, Bulletin of the Department of English, Calcutta Review Office, Ashutosh Building, College Street, Calcutta.

Single Number: Single Copy: Rupee One. Copies are available in the Calcutta Review Office.

---

## FOUR QUARTETS

S. C. SEN

*Calcutta University*

BURNT NORTON

### I

"Burnt Norton" is the first of a series of four poems. At the time of writing it there was no idea of fitting it into a scheme. It seems nevertheless to be a good introduction to the whole and a conspectus, which omits nothing essential to the completed view. Burnt Norton is a name. Burning, however, is a form of change, often in metaphorical use, and is applied by Eliot (in "The Waste Land") to the effect of lust. The title thus is the name of a little human world, witnessing change in the process of time and through the evil influence of lust. The poems provide a generalized view of the situation and propose modes of escape from time and change, of transcending the fleshly state to achieve the fleshless.

T. S. Eliot and other contemporary poets should not be read as if they had attained to the rank of the classics. In the latter it is rewarding to hunt up each and every allusion. For in this we see more than the writer's mind: we see the consciousness of a whole people and a whole tradition converging to a point, which can be profitably explored. In Eliot and others we have instead the expression of an individual mind, seeking elements out of the past on which to focus attention for various motives, none of which seems to have much to do with the common ways of thought and feeling. Eliot sets up a certain ethical criterion and his poetry seems to be an escape from what is into what ought to be. He idealizes on a highly philosophic plane without completely losing a tenuous connexion with the actual. To clear up his learned allusions is an intellectual exercise, affording little aid to the enjoyment of his poetry.

Time in its threefold aspect of past, present, and future is an unfolding of what is ever present,<sup>1</sup> and the part that we see of time at any moment contains inevitably the parts not immediately visible. The stress is laid upon the future in which we could see the lineaments of the past and the present; similarly the past also contains the image of the future. That all

<sup>1</sup> What is suggested in this account is perhaps eternity as an aspect of time defined by Meister Eckhart (Dr. R. B. Blakney's translation, Sermon 12) in the following way: "for in eternity there is no yesterday nor any tomorrow, but only Now, as it was a thousand years ago and as it will be a thousand years hence, and is at this moment, and as it will be after death".

dimensions of time are always and eternally present is a mystical experience, incapable of being logically established ("unredeemable"<sup>2</sup>). The would-have-beens, on a strictly deterministic view, have only a speculative interest. Of the possibilities that matured as fact, the only termination, the one that actually took place, is always present. This links up with the view that all time is eternally present. Still memory is full of those golden opportunities which we never availed ourselves of. "footfalls echo" is an instance of the correspondence of which Baudelaire has written in his famous sonnet; the footfalls symbolizing a journey towards an end, never undertaken. The rose-garden is an unrealized dream. The poet's thoughts are concerned with this unrealized aspect of experience, with the might-have-beens of human life.

There are other echoes—that is to say, memories of things that actually happened. The poet wishes to recall them. The Bird or the free soul of man, has no inhibitions and is ready to act without doubt or uncertainty. It desires an exploration of the past, which lies round the corner as it were. For life in the present is intimately related to life in the past. How are we to enter that world—shall we fall back on childhood memories ("the first gate into our first world"), and follow the lead of the thrush, the deceptive thrush, which changes its perch, robbing the hearer of a sense of direction? In this world of civilization's infancy dwell our first memories. The character of life lived there is best described as dignified, merry without pressure, involved in the natural processes, such as a change of season would imply. "invisible"—memory being recalled by the poet is not visual; a sensuous appeal is, however, present in "Autumn heat", "vibrant air", "bird called". "Unheard music" and "invisible" of a previous line, and "unseen eyebeams" of the following, yield sense when related to the same order of experience. In the functioning of memory the sensuous aid is not an important factor because the past belongs to another dimension of time, we can conjure up the view in our imagination as of things frozen into immobility, statuesque, remote from life and the world. The bird taking us to the rose-garden has apparently the power to negotiate time in all its levels, and as already suggested, it is a symbol for the emancipated human soul, a sense in which the term has often been used.

The music to which the bird responds is inaudible to those conditioned in time like ourselves. Its source is the shrubbery, it is hidden there among the accumulations of joyous experience, well suggested by the exuberance of leaves and flowers. And although we do not see eyebeams which crossed, the bird does, for it lives simultaneously on all the planes of existence.

"for the roses

Had the look of flowers that are looked at".

<sup>2</sup> The theological sense of redemption does not seem to fit the context. The meaning is perhaps that the co-presence of all levels of time is not capable of rational interpretation, being wholly a mystical experience.

The roses are flowers, sources of delight, and they can stand as a symbol for scores of other things as well if the garden is also taken in the context to mean the entire past, which the poet has said, is alive in the present. These roses are objects of human joy and desire and have as such been sought after again and again; they have awakened desire and eyes have been fastened upon them with delight and eagerness. In looking at them or renewing contact with them, this element of human desire surrounding them comes into prominence as part of the past, which, like everything else, has continued deathless.

"There they were dignified, invisible", and six lines later: "There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting". In our present world the past is a guest, dignified and invisible in our midst. It has accepted the present as we have the past. And as we move on, the formal pattern of the dimensions, time past and time present, is not disturbed, and through the "empty alley" of the future we progress towards the box circle, where the present will merge with the past, enjoying the dignity which belongs to the latter. The analogy of the theatre to describe life has been a common Elizabethan practice—the box circle is a seat of honour and is befittingly reserved for those old in years and experience. From the elevation of the box circle, from a point in eternity as it were, they look down into "the drained pool", into the little cistern which fills and empties in response to the sun and the cloud—the pool perhaps stands for faith, hope and love sustaining mankind.<sup>3</sup> "Lotos rose" and "the heart of light" indicate that such an interpretation may be legitimate. The sunlight fills the pool and it becomes empty as the cloud passes over it.

The bird like a Virgil or a Beatrice, accompanies the poet into the world of the past, and warns him that the "dead leaves" of a previous line "were full of children"—from leaves now limp and dried there once issued children's laughter and a sense of their excitement. This seems to be almost a sermon on mutability, a study in appearance and reality. To contemplate reality on such scale is not given to man, and the bird with its power to see time or reality in all its aspects, asks the poet to withdraw. For in the present is contained the past as well as the future; it is also the point where all possibilities crystallize, existence manifesting itself under the selective pressure of evolution.

## II

After this view of unity of time, the poet takes up the subject of unity in its more material aspects. Garlic and sapphire both growing in the earth, interfere with the axle-tree, the vehicle carrying life forwards, which still lies embedded in the earth—the vegetable and the perfect stone alike draw strength

<sup>3</sup> "And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight", occurring in the same context adds probability to the explanation proposed.

from the same source—the earth, but the progress of life seems impeded by what had made it. In our blood there is still the memory of the endless struggle for existence. The blood fed the battles in which life engaged during forgotten aeons, and the deep wounds received in its course still persist as moulding agents for our nature. The blood flows through the animal system, and the rhythm of its movement is reflected in the stars. The sap which brings life to the trees in summer is of the same nature. Human beings, however, ascend spiritually above all forms of life and behold from this elevation the pattern of the struggle still continuing unremittingly on the floor of existence from which they have risen. The order and the struggle are both related to the stars and by this relationship unity in the universe is established.

At the still point of the turning world, mystically conceived, distinctions perceived by the senses disappear. Flesh and fleshlessness, moving from and toward, arrest and movement, all alike become meaningless. The still point is not, however, fixity—here past and future are brought into relation. It is emphasized that in terms of this point there is no movement either from or towards yet without this still point there is no dance, dance which comprises everything in this world. Dance is rhythm, connecting the flux of the blood in the artery with the drift of the stars; its universal character is thus related to non-attachment as one of its main senses: the movement to and from is desire and its opposite. Existence is thus related to non-attachment, of which God is the perfect example, and is derived from it. Dance is manifestation of existence; rhythm, which is a kind of dance, is the expression of life.

“I can only say, there we have been: but cannot say where”. Existence cannot be fully interpreted: we recognize it without being able to explain it. Even the length of existence can be a mental or spiritual experience, and to reckon it in terms of time will, therefore, be inadequate and unsatisfactory. A partial ecstasy, a limited escape from a self-conscious existence may come from a freedom from practical desire, from action and suffering (both issuing from desire) and from bondage to Will and Time (the inner and outer compulsion) under the influence of the chastened senses. The senses operate in giving the experience but strength is lent by divine grace. A white light, the symbol of eternity, and moving, because it can manifest itself in the element of change, represented by the world, can be seen best as an exaltation (“Erhebung”), never weakening or declining (“without motion”), whose intensity comprehends all existence (“without elimination”) and which comprises both a new world and the old, rendered intelligible by means of an ecstasy limited in scope because of its association with a body of flesh and blood. The experience partly clears the air of the horror of sin and suffering (“partial horror”). The poet adds ironically that subjection to time, con-

trolling the human body, protects it also from heaven and hell, both being more than flesh can endure. The irony is seen in the recital of human limitations and defending them as an advantage, which is the advantage, if one may put it so, of being cut off from light. The philosophical position is, however, indicated immediately after: It is in the temporal world that we achieve the timeless state. The fleshly state is time, the fleshless the timeless. We pass from the flesh to the fleshless. The transition is necessary.

### III

Here in this world of time there is scope for conquering time by means of "disaffection" or detachment: for we see in a dim light—through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13.12). Neither daylight painting the world in its lucid brilliance, scattering shadows with the deceptive effect of permanence nor darkness can act as means of purifying the soul of its taint of sensuality and divesting it of its temporal attachments. This spiritual discipline is not imparted by wealth or by poverty—by plenitude or vacancy. Creatures of time, men receive from all these sources little assistance—they are only a flicker over their faces, oscillating between change and change, blinded by imagination, with neither enthusiasm nor power of concentration. They are as subject to chance and change as a bit of paper whirled about by a gust of wind in the world of time. The wind is thrown out of unhealthy lungs; it arises from intrigues, conspiracies, propagandas, engineered by dwellers of London, of its several gloomy hills. The purifying darkness<sup>4</sup> is not found here, in this world of slight and irritating disturbances.

We must seek it elsewhere, in the depths of our being, where solitude is never broken. It is not a world but what is it then? Here is complete darkness, complete absence of a sense of possession, all things that belong to the world of flesh and blood are here absent, neither are the dreams and imaginings characterizing the world found here. Even the spirit's dominion is not felt in this dark region. To achieve non-attachment we have to descend to this world<sup>5</sup>. This is one way, the other is to be still, to abstain

<sup>4</sup> The darkness of which Eliot writes has been described by the mystic Dionysius the Areopagite: 'the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence' . . . 'the true initiate unto the Darkness of Unknowing wherein he renounces all the apprehensions of his understanding and is enwrapped in that which is wholly intangible, belonging wholly to Him that is beyond all things and to none else'. ("Dionysius the Areopagite on the Divine Name and the Mystical Theology" translated by C. E. Rolt, London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1940. Macmillan, 1957. pp. 191-94). A similar reference may be made to "The Cloud of Unknowing" (Tr. C. Wolters. Penguin).

<sup>5</sup> St. John's "The Dark Night of the Soul" translated by Kurt F. Reinhardt, New York, 1957, contains ideas which seem close to those of Eliot. The following quotations from the work will bear this out:—"The soul must be emptied of all these imagined forms, figures, and images, and it must remain in darkness in respect to these internal senses if it is to attain Divine Union". "Though in darkness, the soul walks securely". Hugh Kenner ("The Invisible Poet", W. H. Allen, London, 1940, p. 255) gives an explanation which may possibly describe an actual experience but seems nevertheless pointless as a comment on what is said in these verses: "The third part of "Burnt Norton" provides a second experience, located not in the Garden but in the City, or rather beneath the City, on an underground platform, no doubt of the Circle Line".



from movement, while the world moves on endlessly to satisfy its hunger along the road of the senses.

#### IV

The night descends ; the darkness which is an image of the void man must explore within himself to achieve detachment. Attachment seems not only an element in human life, we see it in nature, in the tendril and spray, clutching and clinging. The day is gone—a life-time or one diurnal rotation by the earth. The clock announces this and the darkness which sweeps the sky, hides the sun. The sunflower, the clematis with bloom and leaf, are members of the sun-lit world. Where will they now turn for support ? The yew trees with their leaves grown chill will bend over us in the churchyard. Brief as life may be, it is never wholly lost, and all is not lost when we lie buried in the churchyard. For even the bright plumes of the kingfisher, which catch the light, will have this ephemeral brilliance preserved for it by the Father of all lights.

#### V

Words and music live in time. It is there, too, that we experience both life and death. Once words are spoken, they drop into silence. But when they are fitted into a poem or song, when they are associated with a form or pattern, they live on as a perfect piece of Chinese pottery lives by its inner vitality or by the rhythm it contains. The stillness of the Chinese jar is related to the still centre, to God, to infinity, to the conception of immutability. Words and music also reach this stillness by the force of their pattern. The stillness is further commented on to enlarge our conception. It is not merely the stillness of the violin while it is played—the sense of utter content it produces but “the co-existence”, the temporal and extra-temporal simultaneously experienced, the sense of eternity in which there is no succession but co-existence, the beginning and the end not following in a sequence but being always present—their presence preceding even their manifestation in the temporal dimension, and the sense that all that has been will be forever<sup>6</sup>. Pressure put upon words stretches their meaning till they lose their value and perish with imprecision. They have most harm done to them by anger, mocking, and by gossip. Christ who was Word or Logos was tempted in the desert by Satan. Word, which is knowledge, is exposed to the mischief, caused by uncontrolled grief or by a supreme personal agony. Disconsolate Chimera is the image of disproportion and incongruity with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a dragon. “The crying shadow”, “the disconsolate lament” carry

<sup>6</sup> “The mystical consciousness, being beyond time, is in the eternal Now—where there is no past or future”. Walter T. Stace, “Teaching of Mystics” (Mentor Book), p. 153.

on and emphasize the idea contained in a previous line: "Shrieking voices scolding, mocking, or merely chattering, Always assail them".

The pattern of eternity is unmoving: everything there has a place before and after its appearance in time and for ever. Studied in detail, the pattern shows change and movement. For then we shall see it as an aspect of time; the detailed pattern is like ten stairs, giving a sense of progress without that of elevation, which marks their upper end.

Movement or change arises from desire although this is not what one desires. Love is the cause and end of movement even if it is by nature unchanging, and unless we see it in its temporal aspect, it is neither subject to time nor is it impelled by desire; its subjugation by time belongs to the interval between non-being and being, the period of change and becoming. The liveliness of life, brief as it may be, is a moment or interlude of bright sunshine whose glory is not diminished by the dust it raises, by the pain and suffering with which it is associated. We hear the laughter of children<sup>7</sup> coming from the foliage—children whose innocence is a guarantee that they will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. "Quick, said the bird", of the opening passage (Section I) may perhaps be related to "Quick, now, here, now always" of the concluding, and we see that through innocence is eternity ("Now") achieved in view of which time stretching before and after seems barren and ridiculous—"The expense of spirit in a waste of shame".<sup>8</sup>

## EAST COKER

### I

Past and present co-exist in the future. Whatever will be, is or was, is always present. In the mind of Brahma all time and all things that exist, will exist, or existed are simultaneously present. What the stars announce and the humble vegetations say have the same meaning. The poem is a declaration of mystical faith, based upon a sense of universal unity with observations upon the behaviour of words belonging to an imaginative pattern and to the inchoate state of speech. Existence becomes meaningful because of its connexion with the still point, with that which moves not yet makes everything move, with God.

"In my beginning is my end"—The divine pattern is a whole, every part of which bears testimony to its integrity. The end and the beginning each contains the other. The work of human hand, houses and other constructions, illustrate the principle of change and succession. Materials of the old houses are used in the new, and the earth accepts the refuse from all

<sup>7</sup> "Children" and "Bird" both seem to symbolize spiritual emancipation.

<sup>8</sup> Shakespeare—Sonnet 129.

sources—from human and animal bodies, from vegetables as well as ashes cast off by the oven. In one way houses may be said to live and die like human beings whom they shelter—they have a limit set to their existence and they perish when it is reached. All things come and go in a cyclic order—they have each a season. Buildings are made, life is lived and new life procreated and then follows the period of decay ; the wind breaks “the loosened pane” and the house crumbles down.

An abstract idea is reinforced by a visual image concluding the paragraph.

The next paragraph opens with the same words as the first, “In my beginning is my end”, emphasizing the unity of life’s pattern as the theme of the poem. Further visualizations follow. Daylight seen in the open field does not enter the narrow lane, overhung by interlacing branches and dark in the afternoon, where you may lean against a bank of dwarfish plants to let a van pass to the village lying in a hypnotic slumber under the electric heat, the path of the van stretching to it with a clear sense of direction. The grey stone absorbs the oppressive heat, the haze is produced by the hot sun. The dahlias sleep in the sulky silent afternoon waiting for the first owls to come for their night’s shelter.

The detailed account of the field, the lane, and the village beyond, comes after the reference to life’s unity as an interruption to the thought that was being developed. Its purpose seems to be to introduce a picture of life in early times, which turned the field into a centre for its communal life.

The field on a summer midnight was the scene of music played on a reed pipe and of drums with dance around a bonfire. The language is changed to its medieval form to register a shift in time. The dancing couples were to be married, it was by this sacramental rite that dignity came to their lives as also an extension of the sphere of their existence. The dancing couple, holding each other’s hands, represented the idea of concord. They went in circles round the fire which blazed. Peasants in occupation, with feet caked over with mud, they laughed gaily or moved with solemnity in deference to the seriousness of the occasion. They have long since been dead and buried, and have fed the vegetation overground. They danced rhythmically as they lived rhythmically, alternating between the time of milking and of the harvest, between the seasons, and between eating and drinking. Their rising and falling feet conveyed this sense of rhythm to which their lives were attuned. Their history, however, comes to an end with death which turns them into dung.

Another era arises with its struggle and the final silence of death. We have an extensive view, more extensive than the human scene, when we contemplate the sea at dawn with its surface corrugated by the wind which blows over it.

## II

The poet is living in one era or another but life's unity, the beginning contained in the end and the end in the beginning, will always and everywhere be the same. The dawn breaking on the sea is a liberating image; it enters the poem like a whiff of air, giving a sense of a larger existence. Nature's role is to offer a parallel to human life with the scale vastly increased, suggesting nevertheless a similarity to the human situation which is significant.

November is late autumn, it is undoing the work of spring and summer—the snowdrops lie on the ground to be trodden underfoot, hollyhocks which stand on the erect stems, also turn grey and tumble down. The roses which blossom in autumn are laden with early snow. The rolling thunder which comes down from the height of the sky resembles the noise of the triumphal car of a Roman Consul, fighting among the stars in which all the planets and the stars seem to engage—and from such war will issue the destructive fire that will consume the world. (The reference to the air battles during the Second World War is obvious).

The passage about autumn, thunder roll, constellated war and destructive fire, opens the section and has, therefore, an important bearing upon the idea developed in what follows. There is an implication of pride and its consequences in the 17 lines of verse—pride is punished by cold (snow) and heat (fire) in succession and has in it great destructive potentiality. Autumn as a time of life is, however, a period when wisdom is believed to be a natural possession.

The poet ironically refers to the thought expressed in the verse paragraph immediately preceding and declares that the indirectness of its manner with a view to softening down the idea presented is a poetical style, already worked to death. To use the mode is not to solve the problem of expression, and the poet will have to fight hard and long with words and their ways for the purpose. The poetry does not matter—the purely formal quality of the statement may be good or bad but that is not the point at issue: such is, not the normal feeling. How should one assess the wisdom of age, a time of calm, autumnal serenity, long waited for and expected? Have the old men, the men of slow speech and self-possessed manner, deceived themselves and posterity by leaving behind them a misleading reputation for the wisdom of age? Is the serenity merely a piece of deliberate obtuseness, the wisdom, a knowledge of secrets without the power of living application or explaining the mystery of death from which they turned away baffled? The knowledge derived from experience seems to have only a limited value. It gives rise to a rigid pattern, and consequently to the falsification of experience. For every moment produces a new pattern and a revaluation of all that has been,

which shocks and surprises. We have true knowledge in respect of that which can do us no harm even if its place were taken by false knowledge.

In the middle of life and all through we find ourselves in a dark wood where thorns abound and a hill rises before us, giving no secure foot-hold, and there three beasts, the leopard (lust), the lion (pride), the wolf (covetousness), confront us, with fancy aiding them to cast a spell upon us. The hill is philosophy. The poet is not appealing to the wisdom of old men: it cannot provide a secure foot-hold in the midst of the threatened instability. He is aware more of their folly, of their fear and frenzy and their religious and ethical disputes. For the poet the source of the truest wisdom in human life is humility, which assumes too many forms to be described. This is in the main a Christian conception. We build in vain when we build on any foundation except that of humility. The houses have perished and the dancers are no more. What seemed to enchant and protect was, therefore, illusory.

### III

The opening of the section with a cry of "O dark dark dark" is Miltonic: its cause is, however, the repudiation of the soul. All who build upon the sand, all who ignore the soul, have their abode in this darkness. Milton's cry is evoked by physical blindness; here it is spiritual blindness which calls forth the agonized iteration. Who are the people struck by this blindness? Their rank includes Captains, Merchant Bankers, Men of Letters, Patrons of Art, Statesmen, Rulers, Civil Servants, Chairmen of Committees, Industrial Lords, and Petty Contractors. For them Nature (the sun and moon) nor man (Almanach de Gotha) provided illumination, and in their death, what prompted their action, their senses and their motives, seemed equally void of meaning. We attend their funeral—the expression silent (solemn, unostentatious without a sense of sorrow or loss) funeral is followed by the remark: "Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury." Those who are devoid of faith, who have lived entirely for money and material gain, die without hope of a future life. The burial is a farcical affair and Christianity will not recognize it as a true burial. Another view of the passage may be that we are all of us in the same predicament. We are all of us spiritually dead and there is thus no scope for individual burial. The poet prays that his soul may receive the light of God, whose excessive brilliance makes it indistinguishable from darkness. The poet gives the experience of the audience in a theatre with the lights extinguished, waiting for the scene to be changed, everything taking place in darkness, the thunderous noise of bird-wings indicating that the hills, the trees and the distant panorama are all being rolled away along with the imposing facade. The significance of the analogy is seen in a state of mind and not in the

theatre: it is a state of suspense, uncertainty, and speculation. After life is played out, what is the view that will follow? The next analogy suggests that the enquiry will not produce a positive answer but a kind of mental emptiness. The tube train, halting between two stations for a long time produces conversation, which arises and then fades away. Behind every face is a growing sense of terror that there is nothing more to think about; or the third analogy, stressing a mental state once again, points to a patient under ether, who is conscious yet knowing and thinking nothing. Such should be the poet's mental state, empty of thought—without hope or love; for hope and love may both be for the wrong things. There is faith and along with it the other two—hope and love—should be suspended; even thought will not be allowed scope. For attitudes and feelings are not wanted. The darkness of God he has invoked will give him light, and if he is perfectly still, there will be discovered the dancing, the harmony, giving him access to the ultimate secret. The processes of Nature, whether quiet or fierce, human life in its innocence and joy, are not meaningless, and will serve in the end to reveal the secret of birth and death.

The poet drops into a conversational manner, and says that he may be accused of saying what he has said before, suggestive of a mental preoccupation. In order to be human ("them") and proceed from the human to the divine ("where you are not"), you have to travel by a way which is hard and austere ("wherein there is no ecstasy"). To arrive at the divine is to arrive at an unknown destination ("at what you do not know") and the route for you cannot, therefore, be mapped out scientifically ("a way which is the way of ignorance"). To possess the spiritual you must disown the material; you must give up the world of the flesh and blood to enter the world of the spirit. The penance is self-sacrifice, and the knowledge you have not is in an enigmatic sense the knowledge you have. For the spiritual is an element of the human and goes deeper than any knowledge formally acquired, and owning this knowledge you do not own it. For it is not a possession but a part of your being. Your existence centred in the spirit is geographically indefinable.

#### IV

The surgeon probes the affected part of the body with his lance. Although his hand is covered with blood and the blade he uses has a sharp edge, the man on whom he operates feels the compassion and the skill, removing the cause of the disease.

For man the paradox is that his true state of health is disease—a body which decays—an instruction of his dying nurse, the church devitalised in our day. The church in fulfilling her function does not seek to please but to remind us of our and Adam's fall, and that if we wish to be restored to divine grace, we must die in the flesh.

The earth is not a home for us but a hospital, endowed by the ruined millionaire, by Religion, now devoid of all its past glory. In this hospital our progress is to death under the paternal care of the church, which will never fail us and in providing for our wants, anticipate all that we shall need. We die from the foot upwards and the raging fever disabling and destroying the body sends the disturbing knowledge of its power to the mind by means of the nervous system. If life returns, we must alternately freeze and burn in the purgatorial fire whose flame or ultimate goal is the roses or a spiritual plane of existence and the smoke is the briar or thorns, which cause affliction to the body.

The nourishment for the soul is the blood which dripped from Christ's body on the Cross and his flesh, eaten and drunk at Eucharist. Sin-laden as we are, we still think of ourselves to be sound in health, with a body on which we depend. The Friday on which Christ is crucified is referred to as Good Friday. These anomalies show that the human world has complexity resembling the serpent's path with endless twists and turns, contrasting with the straight path which leads to eternal life.

## V

The poet refers to himself as being in the middle way, half way through life with a sense of having wasted twenty years between the two wars (1918-39). And he has been engaged in learning to use words. Every attempt he made for the purpose seemed a wholly new start without any advantage coming to him from past experiences and a failure of a different kind. One masters words for a purpose which no longer exists and in a way which no longer pleases one. Every attempt to write is thus like starting from scratch; it is an assault on the inarticulate with worn-out tools, which are worsening in the confusion of a general imprecision of feeling, of emotions of such instability as to remind us of soldiers completely without discipline. The situation is not improved by our knowledge that the conquest which words can make by genius and discipline has already been made, not once or twice but over and over again by men whom we cannot hope to emulate but we should not think in terms of competition, which is out of the question but of fighting to recover what has been lost and found and lost again. The conditions namely those of a universal imprecision of feeling and a lack of discipline in emotion, characterizing the age, are not likely to ensure success in the endeavour. But men of this generation must neither be encouraged by the prospect of gain nor lose heart by that of failure. We can only make the effort. The result is not under our control.

The definition of a home is the place where we begin life—it is therefore the same as the world. With the passage of time, with our advance in years, we discover an increasing strangeness in the world and in the aspect of things;

combining what is alive with what is dead, this becomes full of complexity. The isolated contemplation of a single moment of intense experience with what resembled it before and after—the meaning of a life-time unfolded in every moment, and not the life-time of an individual but even of old stones, whose age cannot be determined—the complexity which belongs to time and the world arises from considerations such as these. Time has different functions—the evening under star-light is consecrated to meditation, the evening under lamp-light to love and affection in the domestic circle, where the photograph album revives the memory of past days with the loved ones. Love is most itself when it transcends place and time. Old men are capable of being true explorers because the dimensions of the world do not mean much for them. We must evolve by meditation, not by action, moving into another intensity, that of divine contemplation and what we achieve by this means is not a union in the family but something of a deeper import—it is a union with the divine. To this we must come through the waste of the world, its empty desolation, where the solitude of the sea and the sky find incarnation in the cry as of lost souls, echoed in our ears in the vast waters of the sea and the depths of the sky. The poet concludes with the refrain: "In my end is my beginning." The earlier statement is reversed; from the beginning to the end, the movement is one of familiar sequence. Its reversal breaks the orderliness to which we are accustomed in the human world to emphasize an inevitability of the process, which shows itself the same from whatever angle it is viewed. This is not the determinism of the philosophers but is more akin to the mystic's vision, seeing the end in the beginning not as separate but identical aspects. Another sense which seems to be suggested by the terse statement is that the earthly and heavenly planes of existence are not to be thought of as isolated and cut off from each other. The passage from the one to the other is achieved by the practice of meditation and self-discipline, serving to bring the two into close contact.

*(To be continued)*



## SAMSON AGONISTES

P. C. GHOSH

*Calcutta University*

### I

The story of Samson in the Old Testament book of *Judges* shows traces of a vast body of myths and legends, cults and beliefs which grew up in the countries known to the Jews. Nearly every Jewish religious anecdote is based on a legend or icon, and the appearance of Samson in the corpus of Jewish religious myths is by no means an exceptional case.

Samson was a Palestinian Sun-god who was suitably converted and placed as a tribal leader in the semi-historical setting of Jewish beliefs and aspirations, and was subsequently raised to the status of a great hero.

The miraculous birth of Samson, his riddle and adventures, his hair as the source of his strength, the betrayal by Delilah—these are familiar features of well-known myths and legends. Graves says: "The name 'Samson' means 'Of the Sun', and 'Dan', his tribe, is an appellation of the Assyrian Sun-god." Again: "Samson, like Hercules, killed a lion with his bare hands, and his riddle about the bees swarming in the carcase of the lion which he had killed, if returned to iconographic form, shows Aristaeus the Pelasgian Hercules (father of Actaeon, the stag-cult king, and son of Cheiron the Centaur) killing a mountain lion on Mount Pelion, from the wound in whose flesh the first swarm of bees emerged."

The tall people of Hebron who came to live in Gaza and the neighbouring places used to worship Q're who seems to have been a god of the solar year, and who was "annually shorn of his hair and power by the moon-goddess." Here is probably the source of the story of Samson's strength lying in his hair. The history of magic and superstitions shows that the belief that a man's strength is bound up with his hair was very common and remained active for a very long time. Frazer writes: "So the natives of Amboyna used to think that their strength was in their hair and would desert them if it were shorn . . . Here in Europe it used to be thought that the maleficent powers of witches and wizards resided in their hair . . . Satan himself, in a sermon preached from the pulpit of North Berwick Church, comforted his many servants by assuring them that no harm could befall them 'sa lang as their hair wes on, and sould newir latt ane teir fall fra thair ene'."

Again, the betrayal is not exceptional. In *Excidium Troiae*, a medieval Latin summary of the Trojan War, the secret of Achilles's vulnerable heel is wormed from him by his wife Polyxena.

## II

In *Judges* we have an interesting stage in the history of Israel. The judges are not magistrates; they are chieftains or local heroes. The schematic framework of the narratives presents a philosophy of history. Disloyalty to Yahweh is followed by foreign oppression which is broken by a judge who brings deliverance until fresh defection from Yahweh starts the suffering again. But it is easy to detect through these repeated periods of apostasy and oppression a certain movement towards communal consolidation. There is hardly any national sentiment but the clans are united by their common allegiance to Yahweh. The cultural level of the Israelites is, however, low, much lower than that of the Philistines.

The appearance of the Philistines at the beginning of the twelfth century B.C. brought a crisis in the history of the Israelites. Robinson says: "The newcomers were the representatives of the Ægean civilization . . . They had attained the highest culture that the world had yet seen, and were skilled in the arts of peace and of war . . . The tribe immediately in contact with them was that of Dan, and the Samson stories come to us from a time when the struggle was drawing to a close . . . The Philistine rule does not seem to be oppressive; Samson's exploits were due to personal rather than national wrongs, but the sense of foreign domination was there, and the free spirit of the Israelite naturally chafed under it." The strength of the Israelites lay in their sense of oneness in a tradition of common ancestry and in their loyalty to a single God. Though they succumbed regularly to the seductions of the local Baals, they were also called back to their unifying faith by their judges. The context of Milton's Samson theme is both political and religious.

## III

Like Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is a picture of the Restoration in the form of a Biblical analogue. But while the former is a political satire, the latter is a testament of faith. *Samson Agonistes* is a record of Milton's suffering; it is also an expression of the essence of the religious thought of the century. In the seventeenth century the English became "the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." (Green). Clark writes: "Life was then coloured to an uncommon degree by certain religious modes of expression and behaviour. . . . A good cause was the cause of God; morality was matter of sin and salvation; injustice and wrong were Satanic. . . . This sense of the closeness of God and the Devil to every act and

fact of daily life is an integral part of the character of the century." This religious feeling works behind *Samson Agonistes*.

The dispute whether *Samson Agonistes* is Greek or Hebraic is useless ; it causes unnecessary confusion. As a classicist, Milton was very naturally attracted by the dignity and discipline of the form of Greek tragedy. But to his Puritan mind the political and religious significance of the Samson theme had an irresistible appeal. The result is *Samson Agonistes*. Its lay-out or design is Greek ; its theme is Hebraic ; it is Puritan in spirit.

To Milton the Samson theme was not formally Hebraic, for in the seventeenth-century England the Puritans noticed practically no difference between Hebraism and Christianity. In many respects they were more Hebraic than Christian. As Selbie points out: "In their use of the Bible they were altogether uncritical. Old and New Testaments alike were regarded as equally inspired of God. . . . In the bitter experiences of persecution and of civil war they found in the Old Testament in particular, language and sentiments which exactly fitted their mood and suited their occasions. . . . The Old Testament became to them a book of the Wars of the Lord. Their God was Jehovah of Hosts. . . . Their theology was in the main Calvinistic and their God, with his sovereign power and arbitrary decrees, was more easily conceivable in terms of Jehovah the Lord of Hosts than of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Calvinistic doctrine of redemption, with its background of original sin derived from Adam, was expressed largely in terms of Old Testament legalism. . . . To Calvinism the dominant idea was that of a covenant to which God and His people were parties. . . . The leitmotiv of their whole theology was 'The Lord our Righteousness' rather than 'God is Love.'"

The Puritans derived their love of liberty from the theology of the Old Testament. ) As Lecky says: "It is at least an historical fact that in the great majority of instances the early Protestant defenders of civil liberty derived their political principles chiefly from the Old Testament. . . ." (The Puritans developed the belief that like the Israelites they were the chosen people of God.) Harrison points out in his biography of Cromwell: "Dark and fierce were the prayers and outpourings of heart with which the Ironsides sought the Lord as the second civil war gathered round them. The fiery words of the Hebrew prophets had heated their brains." (The illustration of the ways of God to men is not peculiarly Miltonic ; it is characteristic of Puritan thought. It is very common in the letters and speeches of Cromwell. In *Samson Agonistes* there is hardly any difference between Hebraism and Puritanism.)

As the chosen people, Israel had great obligations and responsibilities: "You only have I singled out of all the families of the earth, therefore I

will visit upon you all your iniquities." (*Amos* iii. 2) The result was a pattern of religious thought and experience which laid great stress on Yahweh's wrath and man's submission, temptation and purification, sin and expiation, suffering and deliverance. Durant remarks: "The central idea in Judaic theology was that of sin. Never has another people been so fond of virtue—unless it was those Puritans who seemed to step out of the Old Testament with no interruption of Catholic centuries." (The Samson theme should be considered as an example of this Hebraic pattern of thought and experience both in the life of a community and in the life of an individual—Israel and Samson.)

Even in a community of chosen people there are persons whom Yahweh chooses from time to time for some special purpose. Samson is such a person. Cook says: "Sin disturbs the relations between Yahweh and Israel. . . . The sacrifice itself was not so much a gift as a means of ensuring or securing the desired relationship between man and the unseen powers. . . . Finally, the High-priest on the great Day of Atonement made expiation for Israel (*Lev.* xvi); it was an annual purgation, testifying to the deep-felt need for preserving the relationship between Israel and Yahweh." Symbolically, Samson in his death is both the High-priest and the sacrifice and re-establishes the lost relation between Yahweh and the chosen people. The sin that disturbed or broke this relation is removed, and the restoration of the desired relationship is followed by "calm of mind all passion spent."

"A martyrdom", says T. S. Eliot, "is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr." Samson was a 'judge', a Hebrew champion, but within the framework of a Hebraic theme his role is rather like that of a martyr.

#### IV

Why did Milton the poet choose to be a dramatist in *Samson Agonistes*? From Aristotle's discussion of poetry and its various kinds it is clear that the two really important 'kinds' are tragic poetry and epic poetry. Milton was interested in both these 'kinds', and in his preface to *Samson Agonistes* he wrote: "Heretofore men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought able to compose a tragedy". But he had at the same time a Puritan's prejudice (which Aristotle never had) against the stage "to which", as Milton wrote in the preface, "this work never was intended." So he was not a dramatist in the ordinary sense of the term; he thought of himself as a poet who had already specialised in one kind of poetry and intended to write a poem of *another* kind. He mentions Agustus, Seneca and Nazianzen as

precedents, and proposes to vindicate contemporary tragedy "from the small esteem or rather infamy", due mainly to the mixture of comic and tragic stuff and introduction of "trivial and vulgar persons." Again, Aristotle writes: "Tragedy like Epic poetry produces its effect even without action; it reveals its power by mere reading." Here then is the justification needed for writing a tragedy even though it is not meant to be performed.

Ker has explained how the change from the epic form to the tragic form took place in Milton's poetry. But why did Milton choose the Samson theme? It appears in Milton's list of subjects for tragedy. But Ker remarks: "The list does not really carry us very far. Milton's tragic drama is very slightly related to *Samson Purso-phorus* in the catalogue; and the title *Dagonalia* there, does it not show, in contrast to the later *Agonistes*, that Milton's mind was still in those earlier days diffuse and wandering?" I think that Milton realised the full significance of the Samson theme only after he had finished both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*; then he thought of combining the two in a dramatic form. *Samson Agonistes* is Milton's Puritan thesis play to justify the ways of God to men; it is also Samson's *Paradise Lost* and *Regained*—lost through 'default' and regained through suffering and faith. The theme came to be specially significant after the Restoration when the blind poet felt like the eyeless Samson, when to him the Royalists became the Philistines, and the Puritans became the Israelites. *Samson Agonistes* is Milton's dream of a great Puritan recovery, a Puritan's testament of hope and faith.

## V

Milton is very careful in his treatment of the Samson theme. In the Old Testament narrative the adventures of Samson are at least as important as the religious element. In the hands of Milton the theme becomes much more refined, and its religious significance becomes almost overwhelming. We are never allowed to move away from the religious thesis. There is nothing of the wildness and coarseness of the Danite 'judge' in Milton's Samson. He is still impulsive; still there are passionate moments. But he has been given a new dignity and refinement. In Milton's drama Samson who was ever a fighter has one fight more, his last, which is his best, because it is no longer a personal exploit but a fight for a great cause. In *Judges* the approach is rather communal but Milton has made the issue a little more religious and has given it a deeper significance.

The conflict between fate and character, between destiny and free-will does not appear in every tragedy. The pattern of thought that we notice in *Samson Agonistes* comes from the Old Testament narrative. This pattern is by no means strictly or entirely deterministic or necessitarian. The career of Samson from his birth to his exploits after his first marriage is a 'guided'

one. His first marriage was the result of what Milton calls an "intimate impulse." "His father and mother did not know that it was from the Lord; for he was seeking an occasion against the Philistines." (*Judges*, xiv) But his choice of Delilah was his own responsibility, the result of free-will; the Old Testament does not mention any prompting from Yahweh. Again, neither the Old Testament nor Milton holds any divine design responsible for the fall of Samson, which is presented as the result of his tragic blunder. But God's intervention turns the very weakness of Samson into his strength. "So the dead whom he slew at his death were more than those whom he had slain during his life." There is determinism in the last phase of Samson's life, and Milton makes it clear in the following passage:

Living or dying thou hast fulfilled  
The work for which thou wast foretold  
To Israel, and now liest victorious  
Among thy slain, self-killed  
Not *willingly*, but tangled in the field  
Of *dire necessity*, whose law in death conjoined  
Thee with thy slaughtered foes in number more  
Than all thy life had slain before.

It is true that there are moments of doubt and despair, questioning and submission, remorse and faith which give to the character of Samson a certain restlessness and even unstableness and seem to confuse the issue. But all this seeming confusion is only on the plane of human suffering; the pattern of religious thought is not affected:

Just are the ways of God,  
And justifiable to men;

Samson calls himself the "sole author," the "sole cause" of the disaster but he has a faint glimpse of the design of God when he says:

This only hope relieves me, that the strife  
With me hath end; all the contest is now  
'Twixt God and Dagon.

The Miltonic thesis again becomes clear in the opening lines of the last choric passage:

All is best, though we oft doubt,  
What the unsearchable dispose  
Of highest wisdom brings about,  
And ever best found in the close.  
Oft he seems to hide his face,  
But unexpectedly returns. . .

The movement from the plane of the individual's suffering to the plane of religious feeling and back is carefully planned to create a tension which

stimulates the tragic impression. Similarly, though there is no real conflict between destiny and free-will, Milton does not allow the tragic impression to be impaired. The suffering of Samson is real and it raises pity and fear to which is added the sense of awe arising from the contemplation of the majesty of God's design. The 'purgation' is aided by the religious experience.

## VI

Ellis-Fermor points out that *Samson Agonistes* is not a tragedy but religious drama. "He has written . . . a play that belongs to the rare category of religious drama, a kind which, by the nature of some of its basic assumptions, cannot be tragic." But the first title in her list of religious plays (which "cannot be tragic") is the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. Aristotle himself has referred more than once to the Oresteian plays as tragedies. He has also remarked: "Now, the best tragedies are founded on the story of a few houses—on the fortunes of Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and those others who have done or suffered something terrible." The moral or religious issues in the Oresteian plays do not prevent them from being tragedies. Sophocles's *Electra* is a rare revenge tragedy ending on a note of triumph:

Now for the House of Atreus  
Freedom is won  
From all her suffering,  
And this day's work well done.

(Translation by E. F. Watling)

*Agamemnon* is very different from *Eumenides*; so is *Oedipus Rex* from *Oedipus at Colonus*. Aristotle's discussion shows the range and variety of Greek tragedy, and every Greek tragedy is not what we may call a strictly Aristotelian tragedy.

There is no necessary conflict between tragedy and religious drama. There are two planes of experience in *Samson Agonistes*. The religious experience appears on the plane of the community; the tragic experience is confined mainly to the plane of the individual. As an individual, Samson has suffered; as the champion of a community, he has triumphed. The suffering of Samson is a tragic experience that raises pity and fear, and the tragic purgation or tempering is stimulated by the religious experience. It is difficult to agree with Ellis-Fermor when she says that by justifying the ways of God to men Milton "leaves no room for tragic ecstasy." The death of Samson serves as the means of integrating the two planes of experience, for it is "a death so noble," and because it is "a death so noble" it is followed by "calm of mind all passion spent." *Samson Agonistes* is a religious thesis play which is also a tragedy. A truly tragic impression is analogous to a

religious experience, and it is possible to combine and integrate the two in the sense of mystery in life.

Ellis-Fermor admits that the play "ends with the death of Samson, and has a clear technical claim to inclusion" in the category of tragedy; yet she refuses to call Samson's triumphant death a tragic catastrophe. But the significance of the two planes has been already explained. (It is easy to find how Milton repeatedly moves from one plane to the other, especially in the earlier part of the play. Then comes a change. Ellis-Fermor writes: "We are accustomed to associate with tragedy a balance between conflicting moods, between the sense of pain, grief, or terror on the one hand and, on the other, something that triumphs and illuminates." But there is no reason to suppose that the integration, instead of a balance, is a disqualification. This integration is what Ellis-Fermor calls "a progression towards triumph and illumination," but it produces a transcendent sense of the mystery of life which is certainly the core of every tragic impression.

It is not death that makes a play tragic. Oedipus survives his disaster. Even an "unhappy ending" is not the essential requirement of tragedy. Sophocles's *Electra* ends on a note of triumph and fulfilment. Aristotle recognised the variety of tragedy and never thought of imposing any restriction on the possibilities of its evolution and development. He sought to give only a certain discipline to the conception of tragedy. This discipline is mainly his explanation of the function of tragedy which is the raising and purgation of pity and fear. A play that satisfies this essential requirement in course of its action is a tragedy, whatever may be the manner of its ending. Surely the category of tragedy is large enough to permit the inclusion of *Samson Agonistes*.

The Samson theme divides itself into three parts, a proper treatment of which means the composition of a trilogy. The three parts are: from the birth of Samson to the disaster after his first marriage; from the second marriage to his capture by the Philistines; from his bondage to his death. *Samson Agonistes* which deals directly with the last phase is rather different from an independent single tragedy because it is more like a compressed trilogy or the last play of a trilogy. Technically, its end is similar to that of *Eumenides* in which the issue or the thesis is made clear when the design comes to be completed. We notice the compression of the first two parts in the early stage of Milton's play which really begins when Manoa says:

... But for thee what shall be done?  
Thou must not in the meanwhile here forgot  
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight. . . .

Hubris and hamartia, the two familiar marks of a Greek tragedy, are things of the past. They belong to Samson's past and re-appear only in



his recollections. But the past is kept very much alive in the tragic pattern of the play, and the recollections are an agony which makes the hero so movingly tragic. Here is what Ker calls "the living idea of an heroic soul under stress."

Ease to the body some, none to the mind  
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
Of hornets armed, no sooner found alone,  
But rush upon me thronging, and present  
Times past, *what once I was, and what am now.*

And the picture of misery appears in the memorable line:

Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.

## VII

In *Samson Agonistes* Milton shows complete mastery of form, made possible by the firmness of his tragic design and the perfect assimilation of the matter of *Judges*. The play is more austere than many a Greek tragedy. Characters are few in this one-man play, and no situation presents more than two characters on the stage which is occupied always only by the Chorus. The unities are strictly observed. But the simplicity of this well-made thesis play is rather deceptive.

The opening is like that of *Oedipus at Colonus*, and it is followed by a situation which reminds us of the *Book of Job*. The beginning is a carefully planned cycle of moods and thoughts. While the past career of Samson is revealed, the dominant theme is the suffering of the hero. The religious thesis appears in lines 293-94, followed by a subtle change in the pattern—the alternation of the communal plane of religious feeling and the plane of the individual's tragic suffering. Samson's mind is now less confused, though his restlessness continues. But the design of Yahweh is carefully kept concealed.

Manoa is Milton's deviation and device. Manoa predeceased Samson. The concluding verse in the sixteenth chapter of *Judges* is: "Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father." Milton deviates from the Old Testament and makes Manoa his dramatic device to intensify the tragic situation. In Israel the relation between the father and the son had an almost spiritual significance, and the old father's grief at the suffering and death of his son gives a peculiar dignity to the play. Again, as Manoa approaches the Philistine lords with his offer of ransom, he brings the sense of action and causes a flutter of hope which is really dramatic. It is Manoa, again, who by saying, "Nothing is here for

tears, nothing to wail" strikes a note of controlled religious ecstasy which serves as a lead to the Chorus—"calm of mind all passion spent."

Ker says: "The action of the drama between the beginning and the end is the passion of Samson . . . The action is in the changes of mind leading on to the final victory." Ellis-Fermor who deals with the Aristotelian middle of *Samson Agonistes* in greater detail finds the action of the play in "a profound psychological contest." But both of them miss the full significance of the middle. The middle is the tension of a conflict caused by Dalila and Harapha. But the conflict is by no means merely psychological; it gives rise to a tension of suspense on the external plane of action, for we feel that the 'insolence' of Samson will not go unpunished. As Dalila leaves the stage the Chorus says:

She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting  
Discovered in the end, till now concealed.

The veiled threat in her last speech becomes clear in the last words of Harapha:

By Astaroth ere long thou shalt lament  
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

Then comes the Officer with humiliating orders from the Philistine lords, and the rest of the play, that is, the end, is vibrant with quick action. But the middle has also a much deeper significance. It is, in a sense, an allegory of temptation and purification, and its impact on the drama is tremendous. The past which haunts Samson throughout the beginning is in its full fury in the middle, and in the great conflict that takes place Samson confronts the past for the last time. Both Dalila and Harapha are a mockery of Samson's unwise past; both of them are temptations to lure him back to his old weaknesses—his weakness for women and the other weakness, his physical strength. Both the temptations are on the plane of the senses, and the conquest which is purification makes him fit for the last great fight for the cause of God.

That he realised his hubris and hamartia is clear in earlier passages:

. . . and for a word, a tear,  
Fool, have divulg'd the secret of God  
To a deceitful woman . . .  
*Immeasurable strength* they might behold  
*In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean* ;  
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded  
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.  
Then *swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell*  
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
Softened with pleasure and voluptuous life ;

The end is a quick, sudden and total reversal—a reversal for Manoah, Samson and the Philistines. The design of God which baffled all understanding and expectation becomes clear only when the great struggle comes to an end. The scope of irony is naturally limited in a religious drama. But the tragic pattern enables Milton to make full use of irony in this play. It appears nearly everywhere in the play—in the suffering of Samson, in every turn in the dramatic situation, in the premonition of the catastrophe, in the great reversal.

## VIII

Milton who called tragedy a "dramatic poem" has produced in *Samson Agonistes* a great poetic drama, perhaps the only perfect poetic drama in English. It was not meant for the stage, and yet one feels that it is good theatre. Its perfection lies in the fusion of form and matter under the pressure of a noble imagination and a disciplined emotion. The control of thought is superb. (*Samson Agonistes* is not merely a psychological drama, the "theatre of the soul"; it also gives us a true sense of the refinement of action.) It is Milton's masterpiece and a timely expression that gave his mind relief.

As the moment of death came, Socrates thought of his offering to Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine,—for he thought of life which is illness, and of death which is recovery—and turned to Crito and said: "I owe a cock to Asclepius; do not forget to pay it." *Samson Agonistes* is Milton's cock to Asclepius—a great drama of crisis and recovery, which is also his offering to his God.\*

## REFERENCES

- Robert Graves: *The White Goddess*.
- J. Frazer: *The Golden Bough*.
- Ed. T. W. Manson: *A Companion to the Bible*. Part II, Chapter IX by T. H. Robinson.
- J. R. Green: *A Short History of the English People*.
- G. N. Clark: *The Seventeenth Century*.
- Ed. R. Bevan & C. Singer: *The Legacy of Israel*. Essay by W. R. Selbie.
- W. E. H. Lecky: *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*.
- F. Harrison: *Oliver Cromwell*.
- W. Durant: *Our Oriental Heritage*.
- S. Cook: *An Introduction to the Bible*.
- T. S. Eliot: *Murder in the Cathedral*.
- U. Ellis-Fermor: *The Frontiers of Drama*.
- Aristotle: *Poetics*. Butcher's translation.
- W. P. Ker: *Essay on Samson Agonistes*.
- Plato: *Phaedo*. Tr. F. J. Church.

\* An interesting treatment of the Samson theme is found in a secular novel, *Judge and Fool*, by 'Altalena' (Vladimir Jabotinsky). A dramatic deviation from the Old Testament is the picture of Delilah who is presented as the step-sister of Samson's first wife, and who was offered to Samson after his first wife had been given away. When the Philistines "burned her and her father with fire", Delilah escaped. But she re-appeared as a harlot in Gaza (*Judges*, xvi) to win Samson. She and her child were destroyed along with the Philistine lords and ladies when Samson pulled down the pillars in the temple of Dagon.

## WORDSWORTH'S NATURE POETRY

BINA SENGUPTA

*G. C. D. Hindu Girls' College, Moradabad*

Wordsworth does not belong to the class of mystics who believe that the mind's eye can be opened by shutting the eye of the senses. We cannot realise the Supreme Being if we ignore our physical surroundings. Wordsworth has the greatest respect for all objects, which come from God's hand, but has no patience with the sophisticated men and women of fashionable society. The Priest of Nature bids us,

... bend in reverence  
To Nature, and the power of human minds,  
Men as they are men within themselves<sup>1</sup>

We are creatures of this world but this does not mean that we should be guided solely by a standard of worldly gains and losses. Selfishness is the greatest barrier to our communion with God. The world has both harmony and joy to offer us, which will touch our innermost being and fill us with true happiness if our eyes and ears be open and our minds set free from disquieting thoughts and passions. For this we should go to Nature, for he

Whom nature, by whatever means, has taught  
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.<sup>2</sup>

Happiness in the true sense of the word consists in discovering affinities underlying apparent contradictions, cosmos underlying chaos, and unity underlying diversity. The main principle of unity is love, whereas that of separation is selfishness. We can realise ourselves truly by finding our affinities with others and by extending ourselves beyond the limits of self.

... I was only then  
Contented with bliss ineffable  
I felt the sentiment of being spread  
O'er all that moves and all seemeth still.<sup>3</sup>

A mystic tries to discover his true self outside himself by uniting the one in him with the one in all. Since the universe has been created by God and it is "as God sees it and not as we see it",<sup>4</sup> there is a link somewhere binding the visible with the invisible world. The mystic of all ages and of all countries is able to realise this great truth, and endeavours to communicate

<sup>1</sup> *The Prelude*, XII, 224-226.    <sup>2</sup> *The Excursion*, I, 195-196.

<sup>3</sup> *The Prelude*, II, 418-419.    <sup>4</sup> Dean Inge: *Christian Mysticism*, 24.

his experience in a language which is but an inadequate instrument for the purpose. He uses symbolical language, for like is known unto like, and, as such, we can know the unknown through the known on the basis of similarities assumed or detected. On account of the difficulty of communication many mystics have fallen into the danger of making profuse use of far-fetched analogies. Wordsworth seems to have escaped altogether from this danger.

The word symbol should indicate a real and not a conventional affinity. Falling leaves may be a symbol of human mortality, or a flowing stream, a symbol of life, but falling leaves cannot be a symbol of tears. "Every truth apprehended by the finite intelligence", says C. F. E. Spurgeon, "must by its nature be the husk of a deeper truth which we are not capable of apprehending in any other way"<sup>5</sup>. Wordsworth's imagination, which is essentially scientific, does not distort facts. Unlike many other Nature poets, he did not find emblems everywhere in Nature. What he actually felt was the presence of the Invisible Form and Eternal Life in the visible and apparently transient objects of Nature. In this he differs from the poets of his age. Some poets are conscious of the transitoriness of all objects of the world. So they seek relief in a world of imagination far removed from the everyday world. Such a note we sometimes find in Shelley's poems of which the following lines are characteristic:

The One remains, the many change and pass;  
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly,  
Life like a dome of many-coloured glass  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.<sup>6</sup>

Some, again, admire Nature's beauty for beauty's sake. Such an attitude we find in Thomson's "Seasons". Some are satisfied if they are able to make a catalogue of Nature's objects as, for example, we find in Scott, and some are master-artists in depicting the picturesqueness of Nature. Wordsworth felt as it were the pulse beating in the heart of the universe. So he never trifled with or falsified her. He was engaged in exploring her by minute observation and in the light of calm contemplation. When he looks at Nature it is usually to enrich his mind by a moral idea. In the twelfth book of *The Prelude* he praises the sublime qualities of the winds, the streams, the waves and the woods, and asks man to derive lessons from them

Ye motions of delight that haunt the sides  
Of the green hills, ye breezes and soft airs,  
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,  
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race  
How without injury to take, to give  
Without offence.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> C. F. E. Spurgeon: *Mysticism in English Literature*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Adonais*, 460-463.

<sup>7</sup> *The Prelude*, XXII (1850), 9-14.

450  
420  
20

It is true that Wordsworth sometimes uses similes and metaphors, such as we find in that poem on *The Daisy* where the flower is compared to a "Nun" "a queen", "a little cyclops", and a "pretty star", but Wordsworth is aware that this is a work of mere fancy to which he ascribes but a secondary place. He does not confuse it with imagination. He gives expression to such fanciful moods in the following lines :—

Oft on the dappled turf at ease  
I sit, and play with similes,  
Loose types of things through all degrees,  
Thoughts of thy raising ;  
And many a fond and idle name  
I give to thee, for praise or blame,  
As is the humour of the game,  
While I am gazing.<sup>8</sup>

Wordsworth did not have much regard for "loose types of things through all degrees", which is wrongly supposed to be the essence of mysticism by some people. The resemblances that he valued were not the work of fancy but intuition or imagination as he calls it. He has great respect for facts. But he would have nothing to do with intellectual gymnastics. His creative genius was directed towards grasping an unbroken unity in what is presented to us. He spent his energy in reuniting what man has put asunder, to bridge the gap between all differences, created by man's "meddling intellect". To him there appeared an active principle operating in all the objects in the world.

Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
No chasm, no solitude ; from link to link  
It circulates, the soul of all the worlds.<sup>9</sup>

This active principle seeks to unite all the apparently disjointed objects of this universe into a bond of brotherhood. It is interesting in this connection to note how Wordsworth describes an echo or a reflection in water, investing them with a certain cosmic character :

The Rock, like something starting from a sleep,  
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again ; . . .  
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky  
Carried the Lady's voice,—old Skiddaw blew  
His speaking-trumpet ;—back out of the clouds  
Of Glaramara southward came the voice ;  
And Kirstone, tossed it from his misty head.

<sup>8</sup> *To the Daisy* (To the Same Flower), 9-16.

<sup>9</sup> *The Excursion*, IX, 13-15.

Now whether . . . this were in simple truth  
 A work accomplished by the brotherhood  
 Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched  
 With dreams and visionary impulses  
 To me alone imparted, sure I am  
 That there was a loud uproar in the hills.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar manner a reflection in water seeks to join together different modes of existence.

Thus having reached a bridge. . .  
 . . . by happy chance we saw  
 A twofold image ; on a grassy bank  
 A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood  
 Another and the same. . . .  
 Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,  
 And each seemed centre of his own fair world :  
 Antepodes unconscious of each other,  
 Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,  
 Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight.<sup>11</sup>

Though the ram beneath the water appears to be quite distinct from the ram upon the bank, the poet seeks to establish a link between the two by the imagery of "Antepodes".

How was this active principle seeking to unite distinct modes of being, conceived by Wordsworth in the years of his poetic achievement? Was he a Pantheist? Most of Wordsworth's admirers, particularly of the previous century, would not like to call their great poet a Pantheist. The line of their argument is somewhat like this: Wordsworth may be called a Panentheist, but not a Pantheist. The distinction they make between the two lies in the fact that the former believes in universal Divine Immanence, whereas the latter believes in the identity of the universe with God. Moreover, they argue that Pantheism is non-ethical, for if everything is equally divine, there can be no distinction between what actually is and what ought to be. Thus it ignores the problem of evil and suffering but this attitude does not belong to Wordsworth's poetry written after the age of thirty-five, though it may be true of his earlier poems. In support of the argument, J. C. Shairp in *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, says:

"Though he (Wordsworth) never expressly recanted any of the views expressed in "The Prelude", yet he added to them new elements when time and grief had shown him other sides of life. Hitherto human sorrow had been to him but 'a still sad music' far away. But when in 1805 he lost the brother he greatly loved, he learnt that Nature was not always serene, but

<sup>10</sup> *To Joanna*. <sup>11</sup> *The Excursion*, IX, 437-51.

could be stern and cruel". In that bereavement Wordsworth wrote: "Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the Supreme Governor. . . Would it not be blasphemy to say that. . . we have more of love in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except on the supposition of another and a better world, I do not see".<sup>12</sup>

This is not the language of a Pantheist, as he has often been called, nor of an optimist, one blind to the dark side of the world, as his poetry would sometimes make us believe him to be. From the time of his bereavement the sights and sounds of Nature took for Wordsworth a soberer hue, a more solemn tone. Professor de Selincourt describes the incident as "the most terrible blow that either William or Dorothy had ever suffered".<sup>14</sup> The change of mood is expressed in *The Elegiac Stanzas, suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle*, where he says that now he could look no more on "A Smiling Sea, and be what I have been".

Whether Wordsworth changed his conception of Nature later in life or not does not concern us here. If not in his later poems, he speaks definitely in his earlier poems of the presence of a spirit in all the objects of the visible universe. But what matters to us is the real import of the word "Pantheism". There are critics who see a Pantheistic spirit in his earlier poems. Wordsworth became very sensitive to the charge of "Pantheism" by the time he published *The Excursion*. He informs us that it was based on a piece of poetic utterance which found place in his *Tintern Abbey*. "We are therefore lucky", writes Sir Herbert Read, "in having a record of the criticisms made by a Unitarian lady of the time after reading *The Excursion*."<sup>15</sup> Crabbe Robinson preserved a copy of a letter written by Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson in which a protest against these criticisms is made. Wordsworth wrote to Mrs. Clarkson (1814): "I write to you and not to your friend direct with whom, if you would take my advice, you will never converse by letters nor viva voce upon a subject of which she is in every way disqualified to treat. . . She talks of my being a worshipper of nature, a passionate expression uttered incautiously in the Poem upon the Wye has led her into this mistake. She reading in cold-heartedness, and substituting the letter for the spirit—unless I am mistaken (there is nothing) of this kind in "The Excursion. . . She condemns me for not distinguishing between Nature as the work of God, and God Himself. But where does she find this doctrine inculcated? Whence does she gather that the author of "The Excursion" looks upon Nature and God as the same? He does not indeed consider Supreme Being as bearing the same relation to the Universe as a Watch-maker bears to a watch".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 258-8. <sup>13</sup> *Early Letters* (Ed. de Selincourt), p. 460.

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth (1934), p. 187.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Read: *Wordsworth*, p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> *Correspondence of H. C. R. with the Wordsworth Circle* (1927), ed. by Edith J. Morley, Vol. I, pp. 78-82. (See, *Letters* ed. by de Selincourt, 1811-20).



Here is an extract from a letter of Henry Crabbe Robinson written to Dorothy Wordsworth in February 1826:

"When I first saw Blake at Mrs. Aders', he very earnestly asked me 'Is Mr. Wordsworth a sincere, a real Christian?' In reply to my answer, he said, 'If so, what does he mean by the worlds to which the heaven of heavens is but a veil. And who is he that shall pass Jehovah unalarmed?'"

Similar objections have also been taken by western writers to the philosophy contained in *The Upanishads*. Dr. Urquhart's argument is of some value to us in our study of Wordsworth. "The idealism of the Vedantist", writes Dr. Urquhart, "is similar to that of Plotinus... Like only can comprehend like. When you cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, its divine essence, you realise this union, nay this ideality. This would seem at first sight to be an ethical and religious ideal of the highest value, even of absolute value... We cannot truly serve our fellows if we are always emphasizing the separateness of ourselves both from these and from God. Undoubtedly you cannot serve your neighbour aright unless you can love him as yourself. But if you press this to mean that you can love your neighbour as yourself only if you believe him to be yourself, this principle may cut both ways. It may lead you to argue it does not matter how much you injure your neighbour, because after all it is yourself you are injuring, you being identical with your neighbour who is suffering from the injury".<sup>17</sup> It seems that Dr. Urquhart is mistaken in his view that union implies identity. Dean Inge has drawn a distinction between Pantheistic Mysticism or Panentheism and ordinary Pantheism. According to the former, he says, God is really everything that may be said to be the universal Divine Immanence, and according to the latter, everything is God, and this distinction is an important point in our argument. What we gather from the nature poetry of Wordsworth belongs to the former class. To say that there is a divine spark or to feel a presence in all created objects of the universe does not mean identification of everything with God. It means that there is a common bond of union among all things which we realise through our soul-consciousness. Thus some confusion is created by taking union to mean identity. Moreover, when a person attains to the stage where he is able to realize the unity of his own inner self with the rest of the created universe, all his desires to injure others will die a natural death, for absolute purity of heart is required for comprehending the Law of Divine Immanence through intuitive knowledge.

Parts of a living organism have their distinct functions to perform, but at the same time these are linked to the whole organism and other parts through the same unifying principle. So what Wordsworth means is that the

<sup>17</sup> *Deliverance of Indian Thought and Religion through Naturalism and Idealism.*

false self should die. We should every day find new correspondence, new sympathies and affinities with the not-ourselves.

As regards the conception of a personal God in the poems of Wordsworth, we should remember that he was a mystic poet and as such his conception of God is bound to be different from that of dogmatic religion. In Wordsworth's poems written before 1804, God has not been mentioned as God, but as the Universal Spirit, the Vast Infinity, a Presence, the Supreme Soul, etc. Those who accuse him of being a Pantheist, point out how in the earlier version of *The Prelude* Wordsworth speaks of "Spirits" and "Beings", changed later to "Spirit". In support of their case for Pantheism, they state that Wordsworth was definitely Pantheistic in earlier life and that when he grew sensitive to the charge of Pantheism, or it may be, as a result of Coleridge's influence and the Transcendental Philosophy, he changed the phrases like "Beings of the hills" to "Spirit of the Universe." Wordsworth's conception of the Divine in relation to Nature and Man seems to be that each object in this world has a separate existence or a separate soul, that all objects dwelling in a particular spot have their own souls; that all these souls are dependent upon and included in the soul of the spot, that in this way we reach higher and still higher souls till we come to the soul of the Universe on the one hand, which we discover in Nature, and the soul of Man, and these souls are ultimately linked together to the Supreme Soul. Thus Wordsworth's use of the phrase "Spirit of the Universe" instead of "Beings of the hills" does not in any way improve the situation, for, whether "Beings" or one single soul, all of them seem to have been conceived by the poet as linked to the Supreme Soul. In this connection Mr. J. W. Beach's views are worthy of our consideration:

"The word 'Presence' is often associated with the deity or other spiritual beings. . . . With the poems of Thomson, Akenside, Cowper, as well as those of Coleridge, Wordsworth was familiar. And yet, in writing his great nature-poem of 1798, he refrained from making explicit association of Nature with the deity which was so anxiously made by these other poets. . . . This may have been due to purely aesthetic reasons—he may have wished to keep clear of the technically theological tone. Or it may have been taken so far for granted that 'the something far more deeply interfused', the motion and the spirit felt in nature was an active principle bestowed on Nature by God, that he felt it unnecessary to make the point explicit".<sup>18</sup>

It has been already pointed out how Wordsworth felt an irresistible attraction towards Nature, particularly towards her beautiful aspects. His days were spent among

<sup>18</sup> J. W. Beach: *The Concept of Nature in the Nineteenth Century English Poetry*, p. 115. <sup>19</sup> *The Prelude*, VIII, 790-795.

. . . these Wilds  
 In which my early feelings had been nurs'd,  
 And naked valleys, full of caverns, rocks,  
 And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,  
 Echoes and water-falls, and pointed crags  
 That into music touch the passing wind.<sup>19</sup>

These beautiful aspects of Nature assumed living forms in his imagination, and he derived a sensuous pleasure by holding

...unconscious intercourse  
 With the eternal Beauty, drinking in  
 A pure organic pleasure.<sup>20</sup>

But this was the stage, he says, of his unreflecting love towards the spirit immanent in all natural objects. This kind of love, unless tempered by will and intellect, leads to blind faith or excessive emotionalism. It is, therefore, necessary to realise the Supreme Being as the Supreme Good and also as the Supreme Truth. How did Wordsworth realise this? In his youth when Wordsworth was in daily contact with Nature, he realised that there is a moral law, actively operating throughout the universe and that this law corresponds to the law working in the heart of Man. Nature, which is the manifestation of God, is thus capable of impressing upon us moral principles; and thus of giving the right turn to our instincts and impulses. This view emerges from many of his poems and from passages in *The Prelude*, namely, Nutting, and the rowing excursions of Wordsworth as a boy of fourteen.<sup>21</sup> Nature in which God is manifested is the anchor of the poet's thought, the guardian of his heart, the language of his Sense and the Soul of all his moral being. In a passage now incorporated in Book IV of *The Excursion* but written by March, 1798, he explains this point of view more clearly than in *Tintern Abbey*:

For, the Man—  
 Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms  
 Of Nature, who with understanding heart  
 Both knows and loves such objects as excite  
 No morbid passions, no disquietude,  
 No vengeance, and no hatred—needs must feel  
 The joy of that pure principle of love  
 So deeply that, unsatisfied with aught  
 Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose  
 But seek for objects of a kindred love

<sup>20</sup> *The Prelude*, I, p. 589-591. <sup>21</sup> *The Prelude*, pp. 11-12 (The Rowing Excursion).

In fellow-natures and a kindred joy. . . .  
So build up the Being that we are ;  
Thus deeply drinking in the Soul of things,  
We shall be wise perforce.<sup>22</sup>

This may be described as the stage in Wordsworth's life when he realised God within his soul as the Supreme Good manifested in Nature. In the *Ode to Duty*, this Supreme Good is manifested in the heart of man as well.

In the third stage, belonging to the period of his life at Grasmere, he realises through contemplation the Supreme Being as the Supreme Truth. This realisation did not come to him in glimpses in the shape of an intuitive experience ; he pondered over and meditated upon such "visitings" as he had known in his childhood and youth, and which led to that "blessed and serene mood"<sup>23</sup>, enabling him to "see into the life of things".<sup>24</sup>

The real trouble for Wordsworth in systematizing his views on Nature began when he tried to analyse his own mind to discover the import of his mystical experiences. Hartley's theory of associationism could not account fully for the mysterious workings of the human mind. In his earlier years when he wrote *Tintern Abbey* and the first two Books of *The Prelude*, the influence of Hartley seems to have been great. According to Coleridge's expectation, Wordsworth undoubtedly treated man as man, a subject of eye, ear, touch and taste in contact with the external world, but he did not inform the senses from the mind. Instead, he compounded a mind out of the senses. "Informing the sense from the mind"<sup>25</sup> represents the central idea of Coleridge's philosophy. In connection with Wordsworth's treatment of Nature, Beatty says:

"There can be no measure of doubt that he approaches the problem of mind from the angle of Locke, basing his whole theory on the assumption that thought originates in experience, and that of the product of sensation or experience, ideas and the more complex forms of mentality are developed".<sup>26</sup>

But this view oversimplifies Wordsworth's position as a thinker and does not take into account the elements of confusion in his theory nor his gradual shifting of importance from Nature to Man. In the scheme of Hartley, a disciple of Locke, there is no such thing as innate ideas. According to him we build up our highest sentiment out of the simple elements offered by our sensations, and arrive at higher mental processes, such as imagination, ambition, sympathy with our fellows, as feeling for God, and the moral sense. It is true that in *Tintern Abbey* and the first two Books of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth follows the order from sensation to idea and from idea to

<sup>22</sup> *The Excursion*, Book IV, 1207 ff. <sup>23</sup> *Tintern Abbey*, <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> *Table Talk*, July 31, 1932 (Complete Works, VI, 403).

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Beatty: *William Wordsworth, His Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations*, 1922, p. 99.

sentiment. But we do not find the same coherence in Wordsworth's poetic philosophy as we find in Hartley's system. Even in *Tintern Abbey* he seems to be vaguely conscious of the fact that all our ideas do not originate in the sensation evoked in the mind in contact with external nature. The imaginative faculty of the human mind is a separate entity and can exist independently of the senses, evoked by the external world. He tells us of

All the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,  
And what perceive.<sup>27</sup>

It is in the later Books of *The Prelude*, composed during 1804 and 1805, that his consciousness about the existence of this faculty of imagination becomes clearer and he recognizes in this faculty a strength equal to, and sometimes greater than, that of Nature in transmuting an ordinary experience into a permanent object of poetic creation. This will be evident from a comparison of the two passages, quoted below:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !  
Thou Soul that are the eternity of thought !  
That giv'st to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion ! Not in vain,  
... didst Thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human Soul,  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,  
But with high objects, with enduring things,  
With life and nature . . .<sup>28</sup>

Here he is singing the praises of the supremacy of Nature over the "Works of Man". He gives us an altogether different picture in the concluding lines of the poem:

... what we have loved,  
Others will love ; and we may teach them how:  
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
On which he dwells, above this frame of things  
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes  
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged) .  
In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
Of substance and of fabric more divine.<sup>29</sup>

There are many passages in *The Prelude* in which he clearly states that there was something in his spirit by virtue of which he was able to make good use of what came to him from Nature. So the mind of man and the

<sup>27</sup> *Tintern Abbey*      <sup>28</sup> *The Prelude*, I, 428-437.

<sup>29</sup> *The Prelude*, XIII, 444-452.

soul of Nature work on a reciprocal basis. This something in the spirit he calls by various names, sometimes he calls it "the creative sensibility", sometimes "an auxiliar light", sometimes "The intellectual love and holy passion" and sometimes "reason in her most exalted mood", and more often, imagination.

But let this, at least  
Be not forgotten, that I still retain'd  
My first creative sensibility,  
That by the regular action of the world  
My soul unsubdu'd.<sup>30</sup>

In another passage, he calls it

An auxiliar light  
Come from my mind, which on the setting sun  
Bestow'd new splendour,<sup>31</sup>

The superiority of the mind over the senses has been described in the following passage too:

Among those passages of life in which  
We have had deepest feeling that the mind  
Is lord and master, and that outward sense  
Is but the obedient servant of her will.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> *The Prelude*, II, 377-380.

<sup>31</sup> *The Prelude*, II, 387-389. <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, 270-273.

## THE POLITICAL WRITINGS OF ROBERT LYND

M. K. SEN

*Viswabharati University*

### I

Robert Wilson Lynd is well-known to Asian readers of English literature as a master of the 'short essay', a literary form of comparatively recent growth. His brilliant essays, 'Forgetting', 'Going Abroad', 'The Money-lenders', 'Silence', and what not have found a place in anthologies of English prose compiled in India and Japan and, through those anthologies, in the hearts of innumerable readers. To English readers he was principally known as "Y.Y." of *The New Statesman and the Nation*, and as "John O' London" of *John O' London's Weekly*. Advanced scholars cannot have missed his distinguished Introduction to Methuen's *Book of Modern Verse*. In whatever he wrote, he wanted to establish friendship with his readers, whose intelligence he neither over-estimated, nor under-estimated. And this he undoubtedly did by giving his writings a good-humoured and rational shape. Another striking feature of his writings is that he used the same 'pleasing' style throughout the entire gamut of his panoramic sketches, be the subject reflective or descriptive, serious or witty, literary or political.

Lynd's sympathetic attitude to his readers might have been a lesson that years of practical journalism taught him. The daily newspaper picks out a universally intelligible style for communicating a message to a heterogeneous body of the reading public. The uniformity of pleasantness noticed in his style, irrespective of the nature of the subject-matter may be traced to his character which knew no duplicity, Lynd never had to "prepare a face to meet the faces", that he met. On all occasions and with everybody he could be one and the same person. There he was unique.

It is needless to give an account of his essays dealing with different topics. Nor Lynd has often been said to have been 'confidential' like Lamb and "a pleasing story-teller" like Goldsmith; yet his style was absolutely free from the 'urbanity' of Lamb and from Goldsmith's 'sentimentalism'. Moreover, his style was racier than Lamb's or Goldsmith's.

As has earlier been stated, Lynd the man was fully reflected in Lynd's writings. In a letter written to me, Lynd's elder sister, Mrs. R. M. Jones, rightly held that her brother would live in his works. For he firmly refused to write his autobiography. And, after his death, there has so far been no attempt to write his biography, not even in Ireland.

## II

Since Lynd the man is so fully revealed in Lynd the essayist, we must know some facts about his life. From the accounts given by his daughter, Sheila Lynd, and by his associates, Lionel Hale and Norman Collins, in their replies to my inquiries, I have collected some facts.

Tall with raven hair, a thinker's forehead, a beaked nose, and fine facial bones, Robert Lynd united charm with gentleness in his character. A lock of hair used to hang over his forehead and a cigarette was often seen lightly clasped between his lips. His clothes came from Saville Row. But he took little care either of his appearance or of his clothes. His trouser-pockets and the pockets of his long coat always bulged with books, proof-sheets, etc. As he was a chain-smoker, whenever he rose after a long sitting, his coat and waist-coat were covered with cigarette-ash. Once Lynd in such odd garments was taken for a pedlar of pornography and refused entry into a tea-shop by the manageress. And then, Lynd was essentially gregarious and talked wonderfully well while sipping Scotch Whiskey and Apollinaris. Lynd's home in Hampstead—within a stone's throw of Keats's—was a rendezvous for writers such as Joyce, Wells, Beerbohm, Bennett, Walpole, Priestley, Galsworthy, and others. Lynd felt happiest when talking, and his conversational accents are not missed in his writings.

It was difficult for any one to think or speak ungenerously or meanly about others while he was present. 'Gentle' was the word for describing him though he did not like being mentioned in the same breath as "gentle Lamb" on account of modesty.

Coming of a line of Ulster Presbyterian ministers, traceable to the United Irishmen of the 18th century, Robert Lynd was born in Belfast on the 20th of April, 1879. The second of a family of seven children, Robert was educated in the Royal Academical Institution and Queen's University, Belfast. In his academic career he had shown proficiency in the Greek Classics. He died on the 6th of October, 1949.

## III

This paper aims at presenting an aspect of Robert Lynd's character and writings, not often noticed, and left without mention in the obituary notice in *The Times*. This aspect may be described as "Lynd the Political Thinker."

Lynd had emigrated to England when he was 21, with a view to launching on a journalistic career; yet he never lost touch with Ireland. From the excellent account of Lynd's life published by the Irish Department of External Affairs in their weekly bulletin—*Eire*—on the 17th of October, 1955, we learn that Lynd "conducted an Irish class in London at



the Haverstock Hill branch of the Gaelic League." There was a tradition of independence in the Lynd family, and his grandfather had given shelter to runaway slaves in his manse as guests. Sir Desmond McCarthy writes in the admirable account of Lynd's life, his Introduction to *Everyman's Essays on Life and Literature by Lynd*, that Lynd's "great-grandfather had left the church in Scotland and emigrated to Ireland because his congregation had objected to his "wearing silver buckles on his shoes." His daughter Sheila (now Mrs. Wheeler) writes, "Ireland's struggle for freedom was the thing he most passionately felt about." He wrote for the Sinn Fein ("Ourselves") movement (in which he was joined by two of his younger sisters who are living) from its inception, under the Irish form of his name—Roibeard O' Fhloinn. His daughter still respects her father's nationalistic feelings in baptising her with a Gaelic name—Sighle (the Gaelic form of "Sheila") by using it occasionally. She is, by the way, a prominent member on the staff of the *Daily Worker* and is known for her sympathies with the underdog.

In 1905 Lynd became a Gaelic Leaguer, a separatist, and a reader of *The United Irishman*, but not a member of any separatist organisation. But when Herbert Hughes returned from a holiday in Belfast in the summer of 1906, bubbling over with enthusiasm in connexion with the London Dungannon Club No. 4, Lynd was one of the few, invited by a postcard to its inaugural meeting, held in the studio of Eddie and Norman Morrow. Other members included Gavin Duffy, Michael McWhite, Freddie Cogley, P.S. O' Hegarty, and Mrs. Dryhurst and her daughters Nora and Sylvia. This last later became Mrs. Lynd. In 1907 all the separatist organisations were united as *Sinn Fein* on the basis of the Sinn Fein Policy outlined by Arthur Griffith; and Lynd became a member of the Committee of the Central Branch of Sinn Fein. In the years that followed Lynd took a leading part in the activities of the movement, writing, lecturing, and debating. Though increasing family responsibilities and journalistic work limited his activities as the years passed, he remained to his last day a Sinn Feiner at heart. His last Irish book—*Ireland a Nation* (1919) is the work of a Sinn Feiner, and of a Sinn Feiner of the best vintage.

Most of his Irish writings were signed in Irish, Riobard ua Fhloinn. That signature will be found in *Uladh* (1905), *The Republic* (1906-7), *Inis Fail* (the monthly journal of the Gaelic League of London, 1904-1910) and its successor *Ant-Eireannach* (1910-1913), as well as the *Sinn Fein* and *The Peasant and Nation*. In *Inis Fail* he wrote under other signatures also. There are notes and articles signed B.D. and Brian Donn which were presumably his, and "Y.Y." His articles on the *Orangemen and the Nation* in the *Republic* were published as a pamphlet in 1907, by the Dungannon Clubs, and a little later a lecture of his *The Ethics of Sinn Fein* was pub-

lished by the Limerick Branch of the Irish National Council, and afterwards reprinted as one of the official series of Sinn Féin pamphlets.

In 1920 when the Anglo-Irish war was at its height, Lynd produced a leaflet for the London Peace with Ireland Council; "The Murder in Ireland: Who Began It." An essay of his—"If the Germans Conquered England," written in 1915, played an important part in the insurrection of 1916. As Lynd had put it, the Irish national cause appeared to be the cause of every nation—England included—fighting against tyranny. That is why both English Tories and Irish nationalists found in Lynd's essay a rational reiteration of the principles of patriotism. Incidentally, Lynd's passionate devotion was by no means confined to Ireland. It extended to freedom for the individual, to liberty for all peoples and to all good causes. He was a good Irishman because he was a good European, as T. M. Kettle might have put it.

In 1919 was published his most complete study of Ireland—*Ireland a Nation* (London: Grant Richards). The book contains brilliant studies on Irish history, Irish literature, and the Ireland of his time. Of particular interest are his chapters on the "Ulster problem." *Home Life in Ireland* (1919) and *Rambles in Ireland* (1912) are two other books he wrote on Ireland. All his Irish writings are first-rate. For when he wrote on Irish themes he wrote out of his heart, out of knowledge, out of an Irish awareness. He was tolerant, reasonable, and persuasive. He never made an enemy in spite of his propagandist writings. And, as such, he represented the best side of the Sinn Féin, the Sinn Féin of Thomas Davis and Arthur Griffith. Always opposed to the idea of using physical force, Lynd had many spirited arguments with his friend P.S.O' L. Eigearthaig in the Gaelic League. Many of the essays in *Life and Literature* (Everyman's Library, Dent), selected not for their politics but for their literary quality, are a witness to the depth and sincerity of his nationalism as others are to the broadness of his outlook and understanding.

#### IV

All the qualities of his art and character are revealed in his political writings,—raciness, generosity, humour, a sober attitude to the realities of life, and a profound sincerity. An extract from "If the Germans conquered England" will speak for itself.

"Ireland does not demand any kind of liberty which she does not wish to see England, France, Belgium, Poland and all other nations enjoying in equal measure. . . . Ireland, in her struggle against English imperialism, is the close counterpart of England (and closer still of Belgium) in her struggle against German imperialism. *Germany if she conquered England, could do no wrong that has not been done or is not even now being done by England*

in Ireland. The chief horror of conquest does not consist in atrocities : it consists in being conquered."

In this passage one cannot miss the typical Celtic temper—as much in its proneness to imagination as in its tragic humour born out of suffering. As a stylist, too, he is 'Celtic' (pronounced with a sibilant C) in the sense that he writes a chiselled style, the word 'Celt' meaning "sculptor's chisel." Though in the *Times* obituary nothing was said of his *Sinn Fein* days, Ireland's struggle for freedom was his principal concern throughout his life. His daughter writes thus in one of her letters to me (in 1956), "Ireland was always his home (although he lived in London) and the place he really loved. He wanted to be buried in Belfast, which, with all its political differences remained his home town—in fact his funeral caused some embarrassment on both sides of the 'Border.' For the Irish Government always regarded him as one of theirs, sent official representatives, while the North Ireland Government regarded him as a rebel—and you know what they think of rebels there, so they ignored the whole thing completely."

## V

We have put together all these facts about Lynd the pamphleteer in the hope that if somebody wants to write out a critical biography of this master of the 'short essay,' he may not miss an important side of his character. That is why we have shown him here as the author of *The Orangemen and the Nation*, *The Ethics of Sinn Fein*, *Ireland a Nation* (1919), *Murder in Ireland: Who Began It*, *Home Life in Ireland* (1909), *Rambles in Ireland*, *If the Germans Conquered England*, etc. For people outside Ireland know him either as the author of *Searchlights and Nightingales*, of *In Defence of Pink*, of *I Tremble to Think*, *The Art of Letters* (1920), *Essays on Life and Literature*, *Life's Little Oddities*, *Dr. Johnson and His Company* (1927), the Introduction to Methuen's anthology of modern English poetry, and of *Tokefield Papers* (named after his cottage), or as a regular contributor to the review columns of *Black and White* and *To-day*, to the leading columns of *News Chronicle*, *The New Statesman and the Nation*, *Daily Dispatch* and *John O' London's Weekly*. And a book on the life and works of this important essayist of the twentieth century, including in it a 'selection' of his essays, we believe, is long overdue. For, as Lionel Hale has said in *The News Chronicle*, "All is not yet lost in a world that has Mr. Robert Lynd to observe and to laugh at it."

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *The Times*, 7 October 1949 (Obituary).
2. *John O' London's Weekly*, 1 April 1949 (J. B. Priestley's homage).
3. *D. N. B.* : 1941-50 (OUP) 1959, pp. 542-43.
4. Sir Desmond McCarthy's Introduction to Lynd's *Essays on life and Literature* (Dent : 1951).
5. *Eire* (Weekly Bulletin of the Irish External Affairs Deptt.), 17 October 1935.
6. Private information (obtained through correspondence with Lynd's sisters, daughter, friends and associates).

## IMAGERY IN ELIOT'S POETRY

SUBHAS SARKAR

*Surendranath College, Calcutta*

### I

Intuition is the key to all artistic creations. By an act of intuition the artist is required to place himself within his subject to unravel the mystery of the unique and the inexpressible or what can be better described as the very intention of life itself. Bergson contends that human language is incapable of expressing this intuition. For this, however, the poet can very well rely upon the suggestive power of his images and the compelling power of rhythm.

He is unable to communicate his experience directly, since the knowledge attained through intuition is hardly precise and does not properly lend itself to intelligence. Only by an association of certain selected images out of a landscape the poet is able to suggest or evoke the emotional state he himself experiences. Indeed the problem of communication is the greatest hurdle to any artistic process. Bergson has tried to solve this problem in terms of imagery or analogy. Though he does not believe that images can express reality fully or largely, though he does not admit that the image is any substitute for intuition, he is convinced that images can approximate language to reality or provide the only means to it. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Bergson says: "No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized."

T. E. Hulme emphasizes the importance of the purely physical aspects of the image and the desired effect upon the reader's feelings. Though his arguments are in favour of sensuous verse, his theory holds no brief for poetry that is commonly understood as sensuous. He is more inclined to treat poetry as a visual and concrete language than as 'counter words'. He believes that the 'imaging process' is inherent in any good writing and visual signification must precede its execution. To him imagery is the only plausible language of poetry, since the poet is called upon to express the individuality and freshness of things. In his famous essay *Bergson's Theory of Art* he says: "Ordinary language communicates nothing of the individuality and freshness of things. As far as that quality goes we live separated

from each other. The excitement of art comes from this rare and unique communication. Creation of imagery is needed to force language to convey over this freshness of impression."

The image, visualised as the representation of a physical object, creates in the reader an emotion which he feels as his own with pleasure. In fact Hulme wants to create through poetry a new world of reality, set apart from the humdrum life and its reasonable attitudes of existence. So he feels constrained to say that poetry "must have analogies, which make an other-world-through-the-glass effect, which is what I want."

Both Bergson and Hulme, in their eagerness to solve the problem of communication through imagery have left the issue of internality and externality of images out of their theories. In 1915, Ezra Pound, the leader of the Imagist movement in poetry, while arguing that emotion or energy, the material of all art, has quite often to present itself to the mind in the form of an image, considered for the first time the two-fold aspects of imagery—the subjective and the objective. Shaped by the mind, an image may either develop into something that has no equivalent in the physical world and thus be entirely subjective, or it may be clearly recognizable as an external object stripped of everything but its dramatic or dominant qualities.

Pound defines image as 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.' This theory serves to indicate a sense of sudden liberation which the nature of the modern man's experience affects in poetry. The fast moving life in this era offers a series of disparate experiences, that can be only emotionally reconstructed and intellectually patterned into a scheme of imagery. Quite often this pattern of imagery incorporates much that is symbolic, since concrete and external images fall short of the requirement of proper communication. In a sense, the 'Imagistic' principle of poetry betrays a short-sightedness, as it stresses too much the physical aspect of poetic experience and leaves out all that is introspective and metaphysical. Though Eliot has a great deal in common with the Imagists, his poetry takes stock of the internality and externality of the 'imaging process' and presents an almost comprehensive vision of reality. While communicating the meaning to the reader, he sets the tone of a poem through a succession of images, carefully selected and arranged into a pattern that assumes a symbolic range. Unlike much of Imagist poetry, his poems are evocative rather than descriptive.

In the absence of a common bond of faith and centrality of human experience, life is bound to grow complex, and hence difficult for artistic communication. Perhaps, in no time in history did poets ever feel so insecure in their grasp of artistic material, more so in their attempts at direct communication. Intuition, the *sine qua non* of all artistic creations,

is more than ever importunately pressed upon him today to serve as his only refuge in a world of conflicting experiences. Bergson's attempts at resolving the problem of communication through images has only partially helped the poet to be convincing to the reader. To communicate his meaning, the modern poet has either to create his personal myth and rely solely on symbols, or evolve a pattern of images which would evoke the requisite emotion in the people. Eliot has chosen the golden mean, and his poetry is a perfect combination of images that are also sufficiently symbolic. To be more precise, there is a marked tendency in his poetry to drift towards an imaginative awareness of the vague and shadowy life that lies beyond the external reality. In the earlier phase, his poetry almost adheres to Imagist aesthetics and makes use of the precise and concrete images that concur with the objective world. Eliot's poetry gradually incorporates various symbols chosen from diverse fields of knowledge, and in the latter phase his metaphors become more subjective than objective, more symbolic than descriptive.

As Eliot's imagination is essentially dramatic, he believes in the objectification of the emotional contents of the multiplicity of experiences. Since the present generation has very little to share on the emotional plane directly, the poet must find the proper equivalents for poetic feelings. This idea owes its origin to Pound, who defines poetry as "a sort of inspired mathematics which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but for the human emotions." Eliot holds emotions as the only personal element in the poetic process. He, however, thinks that the artistic success or greatness of a poet very much depends on how he communicates these emotions 'impersonally' through equations—a method he himself characterizes as 'objective correlative'. In presenting the equivalents for diverse emotions the artist has to undergo a process of 'continual self-sacrifice' or depersonalization. Almost like a dramatist the poet has to choose a pattern of events, situations or objects which by their very association evoke the requisite emotions. In his essay, 'Hamlet and His Problems', Eliot says, 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative', in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion; so that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.'

Though the idea of the 'objective correlative' equates the poetic process to a geometrical pattern, there is much left to poetic intelligence to improve upon it. In his essay, 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', Eliot admits the importance of intellectual power in shaping a work of art: "To express precise emotion requires as great intellectual power as to express precise thought".

The objective correlative of most of Eliot's poems is nothing short of a structure of images that indicates a fullness of the expression and comprehension of poetic feelings. Hence imagery in his poetry is no mere assortment of the intellectual and emotional complex that serves as poetic decoration; it is an integral part of a total process.

## II

In *Prufrock* poems Eliot offers the most ironical sketches of urban life. Here we come across men and women mostly distracted by their overbearing passion for love and companionship, irritably disposed to find an opening for their inhibited selves. The claims of sophistication are inordinately pressing, and hold out little prospects for adjustment of the inner and outer compulsion. Hence the greatest dilemma for all these people is the difficulty of self-expression in the hopeless void created by their own conflicting desires. A sense of incapacity, boredom and loneliness overcomes their enthusiasm and vitiates their purpose. Hence the images mostly chosen for these poems are drawn from dreary evening scenes, vacant rooms, animal existence and wayside restaurants. Indeed, right through the scheme of these images, variously applied in the poems, an underlying note of irony is ever present. There is much that is Laforguian in the sharpness of irony that outlines these images. The ruling principle of imagery in most of these poems is the contrast between the monotony of present life, its vacancy and indecision and the instinctive simplicity of primordial existence. Indeed, Eliot's idea of tradition which involves not only the pastness of the past but also its presence strikingly asserts itself in the pattern of images that sets the tone of *Prufrock* poems.

Except for a few details, a number of these poems are apparently imagist in their designs. The concreteness of outlines, freshness and novelty that characterise the imagist verse are clearly present in most of the images. Mr. Stanley Coffman says: "The 'Preludes' especially are reminiscent of one aspect of Imagism; they treat their subjects directly by depending upon the image to communicate meaning to the reader; their impact is explained by the imagery which the reader sees, feels, or even smells for himself." But Mr. Coffman admits the difficulty of identifying Eliot's poems with those of the Imagist School. Though *Preludes* and some poems of the group are descriptive, they contain a selection of images so careful and representative that they become analytical, almost symbolic. Eliot took poetry more seriously as a mission than did Hulme, and hence Mr. Coffman contends that "even this verse cannot be too closely associated with Imagism or an Imagist aesthetic."

In *Preludes* is exhibited the novel method of stringing together a number of disparate images which unfold like a film and produce upon the

spectator the impact of a sequence of emotions. In this connection we are reminded of Eliot's essay on Dante where he refers to the great poet's 'visual imagination'. The ideas that take shape in the poet's mind have been properly visualized here as concrete and sensuous experiences. Eliot's imagination adopts the primitive mode of thinking in terms of images. Elizabeth Drew characterises it as "that method of perceiving inner realities through their reflection in concrete image, and all the discipline which has to accompany its translation into language, was what Eliot was in particular 'battling to recapture' in the practice of poetry." (*T. S. Eliot—The Design of his Poetry*).

The different parts of *Preludes* present in close succession a sense of waste and boredom and a glimpse of horror, corruption and tragic yearning, for adjustment. The imagery in Part I symbolically suggests a peculiar sense of waste through constant reference to such objects as have no immediate value in life. The striking imagery that comes almost at the beginning, "The burnt-out ends of smoky days", quite successfully translates an abstract idea into a quite decidedly mundane and commonplace experience.

In the second part of *Preludes* images mostly culled from the pub-life in the city evoke a feeling of boredom. There is, however, an image that is richly suggestive of a sense of horror and disgust. ✓

With the other masquerades  
That time resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.

The third poem in the series offers a picture of not a very respectable lady, around whom a number of images weave an atmosphere of corruption and dismay. Part III and IV of *Preludes* may be jointly considered as the glossary of female and male vulgarity in effective metaphors. Through a fusion of the subjective and objective imagery Eliot can convey the peculiar yearning of degenerate people to adjust themselves to the world:

The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.

Ezra Pound's theory of the image has a great deal to do with the imagery of T. S. Eliot. The depersonalised image in which the poet turns away with a "cynical revulsion from sentimental fancies" previously assumed by him,

Wipe your hand across your mouth and laugh ;  
The worlds revolve like ancient women  
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

may be described as a 'primordial image' which Jung considers to be the revelation of psychic potentialities—"the mighty spiritual inheritance of





He can even indulge in pure romantic fancy and create descriptive images reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites:

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.

*Portrait of a Lady* and *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* are poems geared to a particular pattern of imagery that is regulated by time. In *Portrait* "Quasi-dramatic scenes, timed by the seasons" are presented in romantic images, set against a background of music. Indeed, the change of seasons that brings with it a change in the tone of the imagery also indicates a drift in musical notes that are at times integrated into the image: ✓

The voice returns like the insistent out of tune  
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon.

or

Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.

Mr. Grover Smith says that the imagery of spring flowers that objectifies the frustrations of the lady has an erotic value and betrays a waste of spirit. The imagery of the lover mounting the stairs anticipates the scheme of *Ash Wednesday*. In fact Eliot has a peculiar interest in the stair-case imagery (which first appears in *Prufrock*) since it satisfies his design of a 'Purgatorial' motif for modern life. Mr. Grover Smith, however, reads in this imagery of "figurative mounting on hands and knees" an ideal of dehumanization.

Animal-imagery, a recurring symbol in Eliot's poetry for all that is instinctive in man, is quite often the effective instrument of irony that settles the tone of the poem:

And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find expression.....dance, dance  
Like a dancing bear,  
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape

The likely discomfiture of the young lover who has failed to develop any relation with the 'Lady' has been successfully hinted at.

There is an almost surrealistic design of discontinuous mental impressions in *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*. The Laforguian images seem to enhance the ironic tone of the poem: ✓

Midnight shakes the memory  
As a madman shakes a dead geranium  
And you see the corner of her eye  
Twisted like a crooked pin

The key-imagery of this poem:

A broken spring in a factory yard,  
Rust that clings to the form the strength has left  
Hard and curled and ready to snap

objectifies the utter hollowness of modern life devoid of any purpose. The animal-imagery used in this poem is reminiscent of Prufrock's fog-cat imagery:

Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,  
Slips out its tongue  
And devours a morsel of rancid butter.

The imagery of the public woman:

She smooths the hair of the grass  
The moon has lost her memory  
A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,  
Her hand twists a paper rose

is sufficiently evocative of a sense of artificiality and corruption and our mechanical absorption in it. In a way it is suggestive of the image of the typist-clerk amour in *The Waste Land*. Often Eliot's image is impressionistic in its minute details and betrays an undertone of subtle irony:

✓✓

Mount,  
The bed is open ; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,  
Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.

---

## REVIEWS

### I

A. G. Stock: *W. B. Yeats: His Poetry And Thought*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961, pp. 255. Price: 27s. 6d.

W. B. Yeats is a much bewritten poet. His biography has been exhaustively dealt with by Mr. Joseph Hone and Professor A. N. Jeffares. The latter, whose work was published in 1949, had access to the private papers of the poet, and he used them for the purpose of a detailed study, so carefully documented that it must remain a model for such attempts. Mr. T. R. Henn's *The Lonely Tower* (1950) gives careful consideration to questions like Image and Symbol, Myth and Magic, which are of great value for appraising the significance of Yeats as a poet. Chapter 5 of his book deals with Yeats and Synge, and throws light on their mutual relations and influence, which bring out a partnership in ideas and endeavour, almost as important as that between Wordsworth and Coleridge. Professor Richard Ellmann's *Yeats: The Man And The Masks* (1951) uses biographical material for discovering the poet's state of mind. His basis is psychological, and the book he has written is well-balanced and scientific, an excellent guide to the poet's life and work.

Professor A. G. Stock's work is valuable, not because of any new material it brings to light but because it gives us a conspectus of Yeats's poetry as a whole. Her attempt at exegesis introduces us to a series of insights, which we are inclined to place much higher than what is often described as scholarship and is perhaps in reality no more than a form of pedantry. Professor Stock in her *Preface* refers to *W. B. Yeats and Tradition* by Mr. F. A. C. Wilson as "a much more knowledgeable discussion than mine." Mr. Wilson's study is, however, ruined by certain absurd claims he makes, one of them being that nobody had understood the two Byzantium poems before he unlocked their secret. He goes to ancient and recondite sources for which he ransacks the world's largest collections of books but the exposition he offers on their basis is not particularly interesting. In fact, we find reason to be more grateful to Professor Stock for her straightforward and wise views than to Mr. Wilson for his pedantry with its implied sense of superiority.

Professor Stock has stressed the Irishness of Yeats as an element of basic importance for understanding the poet. What distinguishes Ireland from England is that "it has never quite lost its legends" (p. 5), and in the opinion of the author, Yeats "could not be himself and cannot be understood

apart from the Irish civilization which is the ground work of his thought" (p. 9). Earlier in his *New Bearings* Dr. F. R. Leavis seems also to have shown his awareness of the fact in his comment, "Mr. Yeats starts in the English tradition, but he is from the outset an Irish poet."

A consideration which no recent biographer or critic can ignore is the relationship between *A Vision* and the poetry of Yeats. Professor Stock speaks of "its doubtful origins, its bizarre terminology" and yet devotes nearly one-fifth of her space to an examination of this work. Her estimate of its significance is thus set forth by her: "In everything he (Yeats) wrote after it his thought moved with new swiftness and precision, as if he had a survey of the map of his mind" (p. 162). Professor Richard Ellmann in his chapter "Esoteric Yeatsism" does not rate it as highly: "For the most part, then, the *Vision* supplies only additional connotations for the symbols in Yeats's verse" (p. 237, Paper Back Edition). It is a confusing book with its gyres and cones, its "communicators" and "frustrators" and Yeats's attitude to it cannot be said to be one of identification. For he has carefully named it '*A Vision*' so that the implication may not follow. This is no part of an individual vision such as Hulme describes in his *Speculations* (Paper Back Edition, 149-150) with particular reference to painters: "Great painters are men in whom has originated a certain vision of things which has become or will become the vision of everybody." Yeats's excursion into magic and prophecy lacks this authenticity, and the work will be chiefly valued as a store-house of metaphors, which is indeed the view suggested by the supernatural communicators themselves.

In the poetry of Yeats an important place is occupied by riddles, conundrums, and by what may be described as an incantatory element. This last is a factor of considerable significance and allies him with authentic poetic tradition. In Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* the lines

For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

illustrate what the point is. And we notice this also in Yeats's poem, *Among School Children*:

O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Professor Stock has shown herself aware of this characteristic of the poet as the following comment indicates: "He (Yeats) used symbols and incantations to put himself in a state of trance in which visions, perhaps coming from beyond his individual mind, would rise before him" (p. 81). Both Coleridge and Yeats in the above examples can be interpreted in a normal

sense but a residual meaning remains, partly in the rhythm and partly in the words themselves, which seems to defy analysis, and for this elusive element, the word 'incantatory' appears to be a fit description.

The 'riddle' is found in certain poems for which no adequate explanation seems possible until one holds the key. The following lines from *Memory* may be taken as an illustration:

Because the mountain grass  
Cannot but keep the form  
Where the mountain hare has lain

Others will include *Conjunctions* and *A Needle's Eye*. As an additional example the latter poem is quoted below:

All the stream that's roaring by  
Came out of a needle's eye;  
Things unborn, things that are gone,  
From needle's eye-still goad it on.

Mr. T. R. Henn has spoken of obscurity as the "first charge commonly levelled against Yeats". The riddles, and the use of symbolism are the main cause. Mr. Henn's further remarks state the case clearly: "The poetry is never easy, it does demand this knowledge of what has gone before and what comes after; it requires a knowledge, at least in outline, of his life and background, and some sympathy with his beliefs. These demands are common to much poetry: and that poetry which demands less from its readers is, at best, of a nature utterly different from the complex laminated structure that Yeats' work reveals." Professor Stock's position with regard to the problem is substantially the same.

Mr. T. R. Henn finds 'Wisdom' as the quality in Yeats' poetry which he values most. The lover of Maud Gonne "with beauty like a tightened bow" does not always make the same impression upon his readers. In fact, one who to the end is not reconciled to old age can scarcely be pre-eminent for wisdom. His hatred of old age is continuous from *The Wanderings of Usheen* (1889) until his last days. *Men Improve with Years* (1919) is an expression of bitterness. In *The Tower* (1928) he writes:

Decrepit age that has been tied to me  
As to a dog's tail.

He seems, on the other hand, to care passionately for 'eternal beauty wandering on her way'. His position is artistic and not ethical or religious:

"The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told". But the beauty can well be the beauty of spirit. Although the physical aspect engrosses his attention, he is not indifferent to the spiritual element, which he at times underlines defiantly:

For there's more enterprise  
In walking naked.  
If we see wisdom in Yeats it is largely the wisdom of the heart:

"There is no truth  
Saving in thine own heart"

(Crossways)

Mr. T. R. Henn's last chapter No. 17, is entitled "Horse man, Pass By!" taken from the poet's epitaph, written by himself some five months before his death. The words of the epitaph are well known but being short they are worth quoting for the purpose of a close study:

Cast a cold eye  
On life, on death  
Horseman, pass by!

These three lines have been expounded at great length by Mr. Henn and he has drawn from them a series of profound meanings by searching the symbolism they contain. But the obvious purport seems to have been missed. The horseman is time, and the poet suggests that he has passed beyond the world of flux: indifferent time in its flight may take note of this fact. Secondly, it forms a picture, and thus seems to be a reminiscence of the art his father and he had practised. The tone is challenging, proud, that of an undefeated man, and Professor Stock's comment on it seems adequate:

"There is no surrender in his chosen epitaph and no longing for everlasting peace, only a proud confidence in the sufficiency of his soul to meet whatever may come to it from eternity". (p. 237).

Professor Stock, sometimes, writes with a colloquial flavour which unites observation and literary acumen felicitously: "The eager, springing syntax carries the whole across rhymes and line-endings like a jumping cat, kicking off from an almost imperceptible touch on the footholds and coming to rest with assured poise".

Professor Jeffares quotes a remark made by Yeats which gives us an excellent picture of the man and the poet: "There are only three classes I respect, the aristocracy who are above fear; the poor who are beneath it, and the artists whom God has made reckless!" (p. 319). The small traders, and the middle rank of society in general, seem to have been his abhorrence. But in "Easter 1916" Yeats recognizes the transfiguration of the common-place by an act of supreme sacrifice:"

All changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

Yeats in early life was too much of a dreamer to look at life closely. His poetry at this period is concerned to describe gods and fairies, the enchant-

ments of a world remote from our own. From mythology he proceeds to the real world but translates the contemporary scene into the language of mythology—

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.

Thus in reading his poetry, we have no sense of a complete break or of a new beginning. His development is a consistent progress and the story of this progress has been told by two critics, Professor Richard Ellmann and Professor A. G. Stock with outstanding success. These two writers are the principal guides for those who wish to study Yeats and to enter into the beauty and profundity of his vision. Professor Stock's work has the additional charm of being delightfully lucid in its style.

One enquiry still remains to be made. But perhaps it can no longer be made with profit. For most of those who could answer it are no longer in the land of the living. *A Vision* is a product of Mrs. Yeats's automatic writing. The poet used to know Georgie Hyde-Lees several years before he married her. Was the automatic writing the outcome of a process of conditioning or spontaneous? The answer is likely to be interesting, for Mrs. Yeats did not wish to be publicly associated with the work. But perhaps it will never be forthcoming.

L. H.

## II

*Walt Whitman* by Richard Chase. University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American writers. pp. 48. Price: 65 cents.

Mr. Chase, the author of this valuable study of Whitman's life and work, is a Professor of English at Columbia University and a Fellow of the Indiana School of Letters. He has written a number of critical works, which have already established his reputation as a sound judge of letters. *The American Novel and Its Tradition* and *Walt Whitman Reconsidered* are among his well-known publications.

What pleases in Whitman's poetry cannot be precisely defined even by those who read it with admiration. For his life and work seem equally elusive. Whitman speaks of his *Leaves of Grass* as his autobiography but tangible information about himself is far too meagre, by the standard, say, of Wordsworth's *Prelude* to justify such a description. The poem really turns out to be about a series of personae or projected images of the poet, scarcely resembling himself. These masks or personae he carried into life also; the various guises under which he appeared at different periods of his life include the dandy, a Messiah-like person making a living as a carpenter, a hearty "good fellow", a poet, and finally, a saint. There was another side to his character which reveals him as libidinous and a seeker after power.



Mr. Chase's comment on this aspect of the poet's character is illuminating: "Whitman's poses were not mere play-acting but arose from a deep mal-adjustment to the nineteenth century America he lived in."

The attitude to the poet, once hostile because of America's "traditional sense of cultural inferiority" is now superseded by one far more favourable. It enjoys even the outbursts of Philistinism and is hardly critical of his "immoderate chauvinism".

*Leaves of Grass* announces the poet's desire to sing "a simple, separate person" but the person he sings of is neither simple nor separate, being often no more than an abstraction, and the self's isolation is at times almost a mark of attachment to death as "the mother of beauty", to quote the expressive phrase of Wallace Stevens.

Whitman's song turns from the individual to "the world Democratic". Mr. Chase brings out the complexity in the poet's attitude with admirable subtlety: "Naturally enough the democratic paradox is the central metaphor of *Leaves of Grass*, arising from the double allegiance of democratic man, on the one hand, to the inviolable integrity of the self and, on the other, to the united body of all men. In Whitman's poems the individual 'identity' is always identifying itself and then, as it were, unidentifying itself with the 'En-Masse'."

Among the biographical facts, his lifelong devotion to his nearly illiterate mother seems to be of outstanding significance. Another somewhat curious circumstance is the claim he made whether lyingly or truthfully in a letter to John Addington Symonds of being "the father of six illegitimate children." It almost looks like an attempt "to make the bourgeois jump".

Mr. Chase sees a similarity between Whitman's poem "Out of the Cradle", describing its theme to be the origin of poetry, and some books of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. The point is important and deserves elaboration.

The discussion of the symbolism in the poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" has value not only as a comment on an individual poem, but as analysis of the important element, which has revolutionised the conception of poetry. Writing of the symbols contained in the poem Mr. Chase explains: "the 'powerful Western fallen star' standing for the assassinated Lincoln, the lilac signifying rebirth or resurrection, and the hidden bird signifying as in 'Out of the Cradle' the poet and the power of poetry. These symbols are brought into a unity which, if not perfect, is adequate to Whitman's purposes."

What Mr. Chase says about the significance of Whitman may be accepted as a definitive estimate: "Whitman is the representative of his country because he and his poetry mirror in a radical if incomplete way the very contradictions of American civilization".

L. H.

# BULLETIN

*Department of English : Calcutta University*

## CONTENTS

Vol. I: 1: 1959

Vice-Chancellor N. K. Sidhanta ... Foreword

S. N. Roy ... One More Truth About Rosetti

A. G. Stock ... An Abstract of Aristotle's Theory of Poetry

### *Interpretations*

S. C. Sen ... Gulliver's Travels

Gerontion

K. D. Bose ... The Right Reading of Poetry

'Contributor' ... The Waste Land

### *Recent Books*

S. C. Sen ... The Business of Criticism

The Sovereign Flower

Pope and Human Nature

The Third Voice

The Vision of Tragedy

### *Notes and Comments*

Vol. I: 2: 1960

S. K. Das ... The Origin of the English Language

B. Chatterji ... The Tower

M. K. Sen ... What is Modern in Modern Poetry

S. C. Sen ... Tintern Abbey

The Scholar Cipsy

### *News and Views*

Vol. I: 3: 1960

S. C. Sen ... Shakespeare's Art of Comedy

The Art of Daniel Defoe

G. B. S. and 'Arms and the Man'

K. D. Bose ... Shelly's Skylark

A. Deb Chowdhuri ... Barker's 'Waste'

A. D. Mukherji ... An Apology for 'King Lear'

*Interpretations*

S. C. Sen ... Othello  
Byzantium

*Book Review*

S. C. Sen ... Anatomy of Criticism

Vol. II: 1 & 2: 1961

A. G. Stock ... Wordsworth, Nature and the Revolution  
P. C. Ghosh .. Poetic Drama and 'Murder in the Cathedral'  
S. K. Sen ... Joseph Warton and the Romantic Heresy  
S. C. Sen ... Richardson and Fielding

*Interpretations*

S. C. Sen ... On First Looking into Chapman's Homer  
The Good Morrow

*Book Reviews*

S. C. Sen ... The Literary History of the United States  
Capell and Malone and Modern Critical  
Bibliography  
K. C. Lahiri ... Literary Criticism

*Notes and Comments*

Vol. II: 3 & 4: 1961

A. G. Stock ... Othello's Occupation  
S. C. Sen ... Aldous Huxley: A Case of Dissociation?  
P. C. Ghosh ... Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida'  
Bina Sengupta ... The Natural Piety of Wordsworth

*Interpretations*

S. C. Sen ... Her Vision in the Wood  
Sailing to Byzantium

*Notes and Comments*

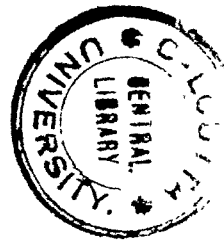
*Book Reviews*

L. H. ... Robert Graves  
Henry James  
A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional  
English

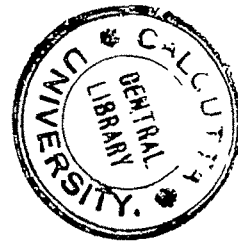
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY  
SIBINORANATH KANJILAL, SUPERINTENDENT, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS,  
48, HAZRA ROAD, CALCUTTA-19  
AT PRABHATKAR PRINTING & HALFTONE PRIVATE LTD  
52-3, BIPIN BHARATI GANGULI STREET, CALCUTTA-12.

4 JUN 1962

3  
—  
3-4 1962



**BULLETIN**  
of the  
**Department of English**



University of Calcutta

**Vol. 3 : 3 & 4**  
**1962**

*Editor*  
**Dr. S. C. SEN**

*Rupees Two Only*

## CONTENTS

S. C. SEN	...	...	Four Quartets	..	...	1
P. C. GHOSH	...	...	Romeo and Juliet	...	...	12
H. M. WILLIAMS	..	..	The Art of William Golding	.	20	
BINA SENGUPTA	..	...	Wordsworth on Nature and Man		32	
L. H.	...	...	Reviews	...	...	40

---

The Bulletin of the Department of English is an organ for higher studies by teachers of English in colleges under the University of Calcutta.

No payments are made for articles, reviews, etc.

Books for review and contributions are to be sent to the Editor, Bulletin of the Department of English, Calcutta Review Office, Ashutosh Building, College Street, Calcutta.

Single Number: Single Copy: Rupee One. Copies are available in the Calcutta Review Office.

---



## FOUR QUARTETS

S. C. SEN

*Calcutta University*

### THE DRY SALVAGES

#### I

The poet disowns the knowledge of gods—not, however, the knowledge of the divine. He is thinking of the pagan idea of deities, presiding over different natural spheres but the river seems to him a veritable god, brown in aspect and powerful. As he develops the thought, we no longer see the river as a god but as a force within, great in its strength of impact upon us. The river is not amenable to control, it is full of a raging, violent quality to which is joined a gift of patience. In the human world, the river acts as a natural frontier, and although unsafe as a road of commerce its usefulness is undeniable. Historically speaking it has grown from a frontier to a path of commerce and then with the advent of the art of bridge-building, it seemed merely to offer an engineering problem of how to span it with a bridge. Once the question is disposed of, the city-dwellers almost forget the river, though its fierceness and destructive power are a constant reminder of what is so easily forgotten. Nobody looks upon the river as a god in the machine age but it nevertheless makes its assault upon us for which it seems to seek an opportunity. The river's constructive presence in the nursery bed-room, in flowers and fruits and in the evening circle in the winter gas-light is felt in the tales of terror which children hear and dream about, in the sap which makes the flowers and fruits grow and in the prosperity which allows city-dwellers to meet in social gatherings in the long winter evenings.

As powerful a force as the river is within us, this being the unconscious, and the sea is around us, around the Dry Salvages. The sea sharply divides the land and the runnels of water in the granite coasts and other shores receive from the sea remnants of an earlier creation, which include the starfish, the horse-shoe crab, and the whale's back-bone, and it casts off the algae and anemone, which we study with interest as among the earliest forms of vegetation life. From the sea also come the torn fishing-net, the lobster-pot, the broken oar, and various articles belonging to dead men—these along with other things mentioned earlier are cast off by the sea. The examination of their nature shows that the starfish, the algae, and the torn fishing tackle are introduced in a series with a view to showing not

only certain objects but the time element and its variety of manifestations, suggestive of remote epochs and of a human world of a more recent date. The sea thus contains evidence of what grew and what decayed through aeons of time, and it brings them to our notice to remind us of a vastness of time even greater than its own physical extent.

The sea has many voices,  
Many gods and many voices.

The sea speaks of a past, antedating human life on the planet—the algae and the anemone belong to the period. The seine, the broken oar, etc., testify to the arrival of man. “The many Gods” remind us of the “strong brown god” as a description of the river in the opening lines of the poem. The rivers flow into the sea and the fact may be a justification for the expression “many Gods”, the sea is in a sense “many rivers” which send their stream to it.

If the unconscious element is a powerful tide within us, it has a greater counterpart in the sea, carrying reminders of a remote past. It represents the strength of many gods, speaking of an elder day with many voices.

The vegetation is nourished by the sea and the river; the briar rose absorbs salt, and the fir tree, fog. Here we notice a unity in the source of energy, supporting life in all its forms.

The voices of the sea are specifically described as howl and yelp, often heard simultaneously. These are animal noises, and there are others more nearly human: the ship’s rigging catches a sound as of whining; the waves suggest an aspect of terror and also of gentleness in the way they rise and fall. There is also a wailing sound from the headland, which the ship nears. All these are sea voices: they belong to the “heaving groaner” or a whistling buoy and to the sea gull. The tolling bell in the silent fog from the lighthouse does not give a sense of the time recorded by the chronometer, but of the eternal rhythm of the sea, a time older than human time which witnessed worried women sleeplessly calculating the future, trying to combine and take to pieces the past and the future through the night till the morning broke. This mental preoccupation would find the past unreal and the future unsubstantial before the dawn comes when the sense of time is arrested and time becomes an eternity. The tolling bell is sounded with a clanging noise by the ground swell, the sound heard now and heard in the beginning of things.

The section describes the voices of the sea; the most significant of which is the bell that clangs, the bell that has thus clanged by the ground swell from the dawn of creation. Its relationship with anxious worried women, sleepless through the night, and losing a sense of time before dawn seems to be that we pass from the dimension of time to the contemplation

of eternity under pressure of circumstances themselves subject to the operation of time.

## II

Where is the end, the end of decay, the end of time? The unheard cry of sorrow, the withering of flowers in autumn, petal by petal, the wreck-ages moving with the current, bones cast up by the sea and praying for resurrection, praying for that no-one can pray for—the arrival of the Day of Judgement which will bring calamity to people who have so little religion to serve them, to win for them the grace of God.

The show does not end: there is accumulation instead. The consequences of days to follow, of hours still unborn, will add up to the total. And emotion in the wreckage of what was believed imperishable—faith, religion, is now in the right condition for the practice of renunciation.

While we lose strength, our pride gives place to resentment. From loyalty and faith not being proved anywhere firmly, we get the impression of being incapable of these experiences. Our condition is like that of one drifting down the stream in a leaky vessel, waiting calmly for the inevitable doom that must overwhelm us at the end.

The fisherman sailing in a boat amidst storm and fog must perish. There will always be oceans and they will be littered with wastage. The future will be as liable as the past to drifting, to aimlessness.

The drifting-in-a-boat simile seems to suggest man's utter helplessness in modern times. But this is not the characteristic of this age alone. It is bound to recur whenever man loses spiritual anchorage.

The fishermen, notwithstanding the dangers of the storm-tossed sea, must go on their voyages. We can imagine them worrying and adjusting the sails while the North East blows hard, and struggling over shallow banks whose dangers are not reduced by the passage of time. They get paid for their fish and dry their sails on return. They do not make a trip, at least in our imagination, out of which they make nothing or their catch is so meagre as to be worth no notice.

One may not cry out one's sense of loss but this sense has no end. Flowers, too, will continue to fade. All growth and birth is accompanied by pain, though not consciously felt. The sea's motion and flow with the wreckage drifting on it, the dead bones praying for resurrection, a prayer for Judgement which man knows not how to pray. All these have no end. Annunciation seems to mean the Day of Judgement.

As one advances in years, the pattern of the past changes: what holds it together seems to be neither sequence nor development. The idea of progress connected with the past is partly a mistake, being the result of a

superficial view of evolution and the popular imagination accordingly discards it as a thing both outworn and valueless.

The moment of happiness is the product of sudden illumination, having little or nothing to do with a sense of well-being, fruition, fulfilment, security or affection or even with a very good dinner. The experience, which comes to us, does not yield its meaning at first, and when we discover the meaning not seen before, the experience returns to us in a new light, and what idea we find in it seems to be beyond any view of happiness we can formulate. The poet claims that he has already observed that the past experience re-lived by discovery of its true meaning, is not the experience of one life only but of many generations—and in it is remembered something incapable of being expressed in words (“ineffable”). What extends beyond recorded history, beyond the moment of friendly association, is defined as the primitive terror—something not fully grasped, the mystery of life itself. The moments of agony are also permanent, arising from misunderstanding, or from hopes and fears wrongly conceived. Personal agony does not bring home to us its truth as completely as does the agony of others with whom our destiny is involved. The explanation is that while we suffer we also act, but what others suffer comes to us as an experience not diminished or toned down later by the presence of other elements. Those who suffer will change and their pain will pass away, their wry faces will wear smiles once again yet the agony will remain, for time has two aspects: it both destroys and preserves and in this respect it is like the river into which sink the whole contents of a ship, negroes, cows, chicken coops, the apple which caused contention and the people who contended. The destroying power is traced to the submarine rock, concealed by the restless waves and the fogs. The rock will stand out in calm, clear weather, and in normal seaworthy condition the rock will be a sea mark for charting the ship’s course. In times of storm, it will be a danger, a hidden danger, wrecking the ship.

### III

What Krishna said is the subject of speculation: his conception of unity is presented under some of its salient aspects. The future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray—is the view of a predetermined universe in which the future is already there like a flower pressed between the leaves of a book that has never been opened. Also, going up and going down, movement forward and movement backward are all one. Time ordinarily thought of as healer is no healer, for the patient is not there. The world is an illusion. When the train starts, the passengers are settled to fruits, periodicals, and business letters. Those who come to the station to see them off having left, their faces relax and they prepare for a hundred hours of the journey, the wheels of the train sounding a restful

and sleep-inducing rhythm. To these travellers the poet wishes good luck. They are not running away from the past into different lives or into any future. Yet they will not be the same people leaving the station and arriving at a terminus, while they move down the narrow rails. And if they travel by the ship, with the noise of movement and the furrow enlarging behind, they will not be able to say that 'the past is finished' or that 'the future is before us'. With the conception of unity and of 'maya', such ideas cannot be reconciled. At nightfall voices in the ship's rigging and aerial convey a speechless message, a kind of direct communication without the help of words which may thus be stated: Go on all of you who embrace the illusion that you are voyaging. Under the law of mutation and change you are not the same who leave the harbour and arrive at a destination. Between this life and the next, at nightfall, at the propitious hour of meditation when time seems suspended, you have an opportunity to contemplate the past and the future with an undistracted mind. At such a moment consecrated to pure thought ("which is not action or inaction"), you will see clear the meaning of life. Whatever a man aims at at the time of death—and death must be interpreted not as a single event but as a series which includes every moment of life—will be reflected in the lives of others. The idea of unity thus implied means that the life of one man is the life of all, and hence the fruit of action, which means separation, individuation, and division, should not be looked for. You journey onwards with this conception guiding you.

Those who travel through the element of water and submit to its influence and accidents of various kinds, must reckon with this truth of unity as fundamental to the conception of life. Thus Krishna expounded the mystery to Arjuna on the battlefield.

To all who journey, the adjuration to fare forward is the only valid one; to say farewell in the context, already explained, is thus meaningless.

#### IV

The promontory is the human world, projected into the dimensions of space and time. The Lady is the Queen of Heaven (Mary) having a shrine consecrated to her; mother of Jesus is meant, and her blessings are invoked to aid all those engaged in the struggle for existence, regarded as lawful by the human world.

Her blessing is also sought for women who have seen their sons or husbands setting forth and not returning. She will sustain those involved in the struggle for existence and also those whose role is passively to face suffering.

Prayer for those who perished in the sea is also offered, those who can no longer hear the warning sea bell, which seems like a perpetual reminder of the Incarnation.

## V

Astrology and the various modes of 'predicting the future flourish when there is distress in nations and perplexity. Such activity will be found in the backward areas in Asia as well as in the most advanced circles in the West, given the cause. The saint's interest is spiritual, and he explores the mystery of the Incarnation, the point of intersection of the timeless with time. To describe this as an occupation is to be inexact. For it is an interest divinely bestowed and pursued with a lifetime of love, selflessness and devotion. For most of us eternity does not manifest itself in time, there is no sense of Incarnation revealing itself to us. We see time as a fractional experience, or eternity as an expectation. Beyond hints and guesses, the conception of unity does not enter the sphere of our experience—our distractions, pleasures and occupations underline separateness, unity lies outside, inaccessible and yet not entirely unknown. The discrete nature of what we perceive is suggested by a shaft of sunlight, separated from its source, and appearing as something seen out of context and marvelled at. The wild growth of thyme, giving a sense of nature with the assistance of imagination, visualising without the aid of a physical reality, the lightning in the winter sky, the waterfall are among other items of an unrelated series of experiences, which misses unity but we come closest to it through music, which heard with intensity, makes for a brief while the song and the listener an indivisible whole, a unity. From these hints and guesses of a fundamental reality, we have to turn to prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action as surer means of its realization. These slight glimpses based upon imperfect guesses and the grace of God, point to Incarnation. The concept of Incarnation stands for a reconciliation of opposites, of all contradictions; the impossible, the logically inconceivable, becomes the actual. Past and future, losing their distinctions, meet and unite. The improper action has an earth-born origin. Right action is freedom from past and from future also. This freedom for most of us is an aim never to be realised. That we can keep up our spirits in the face of failure is explained by the continuity of effort. We are content if we are able in our temporal existence before death ("not too far from the Yew tree") to support a life which is receptive of truth.

## LITTLE GIDDING

### I

The Indian summer in a man's life obeys its own laws and is not like a season in nature's course; it acquaints one with the everlasting, even if it draws towards the end of one's life. It stands between the heat of one's prime and the freezing-time of one's old age. The short spell of warmth covers up the wintry landscape as it were; it energises the physical frame

and its power is felt in a controlled emotion, the heart's strength is diffused through feelings and perceptions, not adding a passionate apprehension but a clear, undisturbed, rational view. The Indian summer appearing in nature as an interlude before the winter has a different effect—seen in reflection in a pool, it produces in the early afternoon a dazzling glare, shining more brilliantly than red flowers on a branch or a pan filled with glowing coal. In human life its effect is spiritualizing and a sort of prophetic power descends upon us, which operates without the interference of the emotions, while life draws to an end. The soul's strength is most strongly felt in this brief season after which life is frozen out of us. While the soul spreads its dominion, there is no touch of the earth, no reminder of life's limitations, to impede its action. Now is the true spring, the internal blossoming which does not, however, follow the seasonal cycle. The effect of the pentecostal fire is not only to make the soul blaze with power, but also to transform nature into an aspect of purity. The hedges whiten with blossom, which comes suddenly and which neither grows nor fades, not being in the scheme of generation. Where is the Indian summer, whose magical power to transform and elevate is beyond imagination—where is the point of its appearance, the unimaginable zero summer?

If you wish to walk the path of spirituality, leaving everything behind in the prime of your life, you will have temptations ("May, with voluptuary sweetness"), haunting your imagination. The experience will not change even if you took protracted trouble to achieve your purpose. You may also be driven by frustration in the darkness of despondency, you may proceed in the full consciousness of your mind without, however, being guided by a sense of what exactly you seek and when you leave the rough road of the struggle for existence and the sensual life, and contemplate death and the past, your position will not be improved. What you seek will not yield its secret to you. It will remain an empty shell and its meaning will be discovered in the shape of a fulfilment that may, after all, never come. When you turn to the spiritual, either you have no definite quest, or an inadequate one, which will be altered in fulfilment. For the practice of penance you may choose places near dangerous seas, dark lakes, deserts, or even in a city. England and the present moment are the nearest in time and place and will serve as well as any.

Turning to the spiritual, starting from a given point in time and place, you will always meet with the same failure. Until you get rid of the senses and the will, there is no way for you. For the spiritual world does not call for intellectual exercise; you are not to compare, correct, and instruct yourself. You are not to satisfy curiosity and carry back an account of your experience. You must kneel and pray in the best way. A prayer is no mere order of words, and the product of a mind operating on the conscious level;

it is not even audibility. The dead know that their speech did not serve for prayer when they lived. From the dead, therefore, will come the right instruction. The dead make prayers such as the language of the living cannot emulate. At this moment the approach to the Idea of Incarnation may be made in England and nowhere. The qualifying terms "Never and Always" and the earlier "nowhere", are the devotee's expression of loyalty to a shrine where true worship may be conducted. It is the expression of orthodoxy which will hold true even if the world offers worshippers seeking salvation other shrines and modes for attaining their goal.

## II

All the glowing dreams, all the love and hope ("roses") which lend joy to life, are consumed by time and their memory is like dust clinging to the sleeves of an old man. They dwell like a faint memory in the air; the dust which hovers in the air and which we breathe in is the remains of a house, its walls, its wainscot, even its mouse, now no more. When hope and despair perish, one great prop of existence is withdrawn.

Mouth and eyes may be wet or dry—it is implied that the invading drouth is death, is barrenness. The parched eviscerated soil is an image of death; the earth will not yield harvest when it goes barren through the loss of moisture. Earth has a creative power, so has life and the loss of this power is signified by the figure of a dead earth.

Water and fire usurp the site once occupied by the town, the pasture and the weed. Water and fire with their ritual implications flood and burn where sacrifice was due and was not made as well as the sanctuary and choir whose ancient foundations fell out of repair through human forgetfulness. When water and fire act as purely material forces they are surely dead.

The poet meets "some dead master", Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare rolled into one ("a compound ghost"). He describes the actual moment of the meeting. If it had been a meeting in the dimensions of time and space, he could write about it with the clarity due to such experience. But his meeting is on the spiritual plane. Earthly happenings merely provide metaphors, they are to be fought with and subdued to the poet's purpose and hence what he writes suggests a wrestling with words and phrases, which still refuse to act as medium for what he has to say.

In the uncertain hour before morning, etc.

The description would be too long and meaningless if it merely implied the twilight preceding day-break. It clearly bears reference to the chaos through which a man struggles before he sees spiritual light, removing all confusions from the mind as does daylight from the landscape which lay wrapped in darkness. He is giving an account of the despondent struggle



prolonging the spiritual night to an eternity; it is a city-dweller's experience ("over the asphalt" makes this evident) and the time of the year seems to be late September (the autumn of life). The fallen leaves on the asphalt road show well the season meant. Like Dante he is also referring to "Nel mezzo del cammin li nostra vita" (In the middle of the journey of life) by the reference to autumn. Dante writes of the fear which had continued in the lake of his heart during the night. Eliot suggests a similar experience by his "interminable night". "Dark dove with the flickering tongue" not only turns the night into a bird but "the flickering tongue" makes it also an image of the deceptive serpent, which by its treachery made our first ancestor an exile from the Garden of Eden. "Between the three districts" should mean hell, purgatory, and heaven. The poet meets before "the urban dawn wind" the dead master, with a down-turned face, walking; loitering, and hurried as if blown to him like the dead leaves. In Dante, too, the time mentioned was "the beginning of the morning". It was a "compound ghost", "Both one and many", "both intimate and unidentifiable", and the poet played a double role, of being himself and another. "What! are you here?"—the cry implied that in the space-time dimension they were strangers. The poet's consciousness recognized his own self co-existing with that of another. The master's face was changing as evidence of his being not one person but many; yet in the shape of the query addressed at the meeting the recognition had taken place. The two watched on the city pavement, submitting to the power of the spirit that led them, both such complete strangers, that in the recession of time and the union of the past and the present, they achieve a harmony unbroken by the fear of misunderstanding because they are isolated in time and space, not meeting either in the past or the future or at any place. The poet speaks: The wonder (at this intersection of time) which he feels does not disturb him, yet to accept the situation calmly would be extraordinary, and he requests the Master to speak, warning him at the same time that he may not understand his speech and that it may not awaken any remembrance in him. To which he replied: I have no special desire to recapitulate my ideas and attitude to life, which you have forgotten. While I expressed them, they had their use and propriety. Now let them lie in the limbo of forgetfulness. So you can rely on your own resources and others too may copy your example, forgiving me as their author, both for the good and bad I taught. The fruit of the last season is eaten, and the well-fed beast will kick the pail which contained it. No gratitude is expected for the nourishment once supplied. The animal world has a short memory for benefits received and the human world is not necessarily better in this respect. The past is soon outmoded and the future must await its own prophets. Referring to the "concord at this intersection of time", the union of the past and the present, the

Master says that such facility to pass from one dimension of time to another allows the spirit, still unsatisfied and migratory, to wander between two worlds, the past and the present, assimilated to each other. He has now access to words, which he never thought to speak in a region ("streets") which he never expected to visit when he laid down his mortal body in a far-off land. As a poet he shared a concern for speech and for purifying the dialect of the tribe, thereby extending the mind's power both to look before and after. He now proposes to disclose the gifts reserved for age, which will set a crown upon a life-time of effort made by our poet. The first is the paralysing effect of a disenchantment arising from a sense of the loss of values; secondly, the realization that there is nothing to be done to cure human folly in a world where laughter intended to amuse acquires the power to wound; and finally, there is the tragic re-enactment of all you have done and been; then motives are understood, and one sees that what one took for exercise of virtue caused harm. What was approved of by the imperceptient seems a blot on one's self-respect. The human spirit is driven from one wrong to another unless one knows how to move like a dancer according to measure, revealing a complete self-mastery. The morning was breaking. In the half-lighted street where the view was distorted the Master left him with a kind of farewell, melting away into the thin air when he was called by the blowing of a horn.

### III

There are three things which grow and are available at the same place yet are they completely different: Attachment, Detachment and Indifference. To be liberated we need not less but more love, love that would grow beyond desire, letting us free from the fetters of time (past and future). Thus love of a country may be equated with love for our own field of action, which contemplation will find to be of little consequence but not indifference, bearing no results. History may be servitude, it may also be freedom. It may set us to imitate and follow what had been and it may also teach us to avoid this and cultivate instead a state of being. By means of liberating love, faces and places to which we are attached lose their individual lineaments which impose upon us with a narrowing and exclusive effect, to be renewed, transfigured and fitted into another pattern. In the new perspective sin seems necessary and needful tending to universal good. If the poet thinks in terms of place and people, he does not see everything he can approve of. They are neither kin nor are they kind, having some genius and all contending with one another and yet in their contention they achieve unity. If the poet turns to the thought of death and disaster—of a king in the days of his defeat and disgrace, of men perishing on the scaffold, and of those whose death is followed by oblivion, and of one who died blind and quiet,

he wonders what rational reason should make him think of these rather than of those who are dying, who belong to his own time and generation. There is no purpose in rolling back time, in reviving by incantation sanctities that are no more, causes long lost, quarrels that are forgotten and policies no more to be pursued. By death these men and those who opposed them and those whom they opposed accept the constitution of silence and are folded in a single party. Whatever we have from the fortunate is ultimately taken from the defeated, and the highest heritage is a symbol—the Cross, perfected in death and martyrdom. The ultimate state is universal well-being to which we shall be led by the purification of our will and by prayer.

#### IV

The prophets have declared that it is by the ordeal of fire that human sin and error are corrected; the communication with the spiritual world, represented by the descending dove, is made possible by the choice of a pyre where the body may be consumed by the fire, which will consume it and not leave it to the flame of lust to consume and destroy it.

The burning torment to which we have to be subjected is the discovery of Love. It is Love though its presence is not obvious, that wove the Nessus shirt of torture against which all human strength is unavailing.

We breathe and have our being either to be consumed by the fire of lust or by the purgatorial fire, which will purify the will.

#### V

The conventional distinction between the beginning and the end does not survive close examination. For when we make an end, we in fact begin, and always an end supplies a fresh starting point. So with words and phrases. In every phrase and sentence when right (where every word is rightly chosen, aiding the others by its appropriateness, being neither weak nor meretricious, and serving as a bridge between its root sense and the later accretions; the common word which is neither debased nor pedantic, strong in precision and formal quality so that the whole sentence will emerge as complete in its rhythmic force like a couple dancing delightedly), in each phrase or sentence we see a beginning and an end—it ends the problem of expressing one idea and begins that of expressing another to which it leads. Every poem is an epitaph in the sense that it expresses an aspect of the poet's self finally and forever which will not recur again. Whatever a man does brings him nearer to his end, to the block where he may be executed, to the fire which may consume him, to the sea's throat which may engulf him and to the stone under which he lies buried, the inscription being undecipherable since we see in it not the name of one person but that of the

whole race of men. And life does not end in death. It provides a new starting point. We die with the dying—for death has a minute aspect in which every moment of life means a kind of death and so when people die around us, we who live also share the experience and when they leave the scene of life, we go with them; we explore in our thought the world where they go and in a sense, therefore, we may be said to accompany them. The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew tree are of equal duration—death and life have an equal import in terms of time. People who have no history are equally subject to time with people who have—for history, the poet tells us, is a pattern of timeless moments which having been will be again. So this winter's afternoon with light fading in a solitary chapel, history for the poet is identified with the timeless moment through which he lives an English scene. The timeless may be equated with the typical, with that which will come again and whose vitality is perennial. The English scene is universalised, the afternoon in winter is a moment bearing an endless significance and as such its place in history is ensured.

With the drawing of this Love the Voice of this Calling.

This line isolated in the shape of an independent paragraph has a meaning which is perhaps the meaning of the whole poem:

~ This love, which draws, which compels with a force not to be resisted is discovered to be the ultimate secret of life; its power prevails in making us proceed along the path of life, toiling endlessly and yet making no progress—each point of the journey, oft-repeated, seems new to us. The gate through which we pass is unknown and yet we remember it by resort to history—and the last of the human race will discover what in fact was the beginning—the source of the longest river, the river of life, the river of time with the voice of powerful impulses (“hidden waterfall”), speaking to us and new life growing in a background of nature (“children in the apple-tree”). The knowledge of life's continuity and its perpetual freshness we have heard, heard imperfectly in the moment of meditation (“in the stillness”) between life and death (“two waves of the sea”), one bringing us to the shore of the world and the other sweeping us away from it. We must not let the present moment (“now, here, now, always”) pass by and the full value of the moment may be grasped by means of simplicity or absolute truth, which will mean that we must abandon all forms of unreality (“costing not less than everything”). All shall be well then and all manner of things shall be well. Fire and rose will be one—the fire which ascends heavenwards and is a symbol of the spiritual will invest life and will be one with it.

## ROMEO AND JULIET

P. C. GHOSH

*Calcutta University*

### I

*Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most popular plays of Shakespeare. but it has not received the critical attention which it deserves. Its position is rather interesting because, though it is preceded and followed mainly by comedies, it is Shakespeare's first full experiment in tragedy.)

The Prologue is not a common device in Shakespearean drama. It is used only when Shakespeare has some special purpose, and *Romeo and Juliet* is the first play in which he uses it; the other plays are: *Henry IV 2*, *Henry V*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pericles* and *Henry VIII*. It appears in the Quarto (1599), but it is omitted in the Folio (1623), which probably means that while Shakespeare himself thought it important, after his death it was dropped because the actors had found it unnecessary. Charlton thinks that it is "a sort of programme-prologue to prompt the audience to see the play from the right point of view." But he does not explain why Shakespeare thought it necessary to prompt the audience. Besides, what is "the right point of view"? Commenting on the emphasis on fate Charlton says: "The intent of this emphasis is clear . . . He disowns responsibility and throws it on Destiny, Fate. The device is well warranted in the tragic tradition, and especially in its Senecan models." (But this is hardly convincing. I think the Prologue tries to create a bias, to obscure "the right point of view." It seeks to divert the spectators' attention from the weakness of the play by directing and restricting their attention to what the dramatist wants them to notice in the rush of incidents and characters on the stage. In fact, it tries to conceal the confusion and failings of the artist. The Prologue stresses the role of Fate because the dramatist fails to provide tragic inevitability, and it underscores Feud which is so unsubstantial in the play. However, the Prologue was withdrawn when the reputation of the play was firmly established.

### II

// At the time when Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, the general standard of tragedy was by no means very high. He thought of tragedy primarily as a play with an unhappy ending, deaths and violences as its main features. In *Romeo and Juliet* he tries to show the working of Fate and Feud

in the sad story of two young lovers, but the general impression is that of a drama of suspense and excitement, poetry and wit, humour and pathos. It is, however, difficult to agree with Charlton when he says: "Even Shakespeare appears to have felt that, as an experiment, it had disappointed him." Shakespeare was probably aware of some deficiencies, but there is no reason to suppose that he was disappointed. In fact, *Romeo and Juliet* is much better than most of the tragedies which were popular when he made his first experiment.)

Harrison says: "As it is, at every critical moment something goes wrong by unlucky accident; and it is mainly for this reason that *Romeo and Juliet* never achieves deep tragedy." He further remarks: "...if Friar Lawrence had reached the tomb five minutes earlier, then all would have been well." It is true that the play is lacking in the sense of tragic inevitability and that the tragic disaster is made to depend on mere chance. But it is wrong to say that the play fails to be "deep tragedy" *mainly* for this reason. The same weakness appears in *King Lear*:

I pant for life: some good I mean to do,  
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—  
Be brief in it—to the castle; for my writ  
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:—  
Nay, send in time. —V, 3.

Had Edmund said all this a little earlier, "all would have been well", and *King Lear* would not have been a tragedy!

In preparing the lay-out of *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare depended largely on the working of Fate and Feud. But it is wrong to think with Charlton that the dramatist left the plot to Fate and Feud alone for planning the ruin of the young lovers. Shakespeare surely felt that neither Fate nor Feud was adequate to give him a convincing tragedy. Something else was required, and it was Character. To provide full tragic experience, Character must enter into action even though the action is prompted by Fate, and must shoulder its due share of responsibility. So he tried to establish a relation between the tragic characters and the tragic action. There is in both *Romeo and Juliet* a certain rashness, an unwise excess, of which they are conscious, and which is noticed by others, as they are drawn to each other:

I have no joy of this contract to-night:  
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden.—II, 1.  
These violent delights have violent ends . . .  
Therefore, love moderately; —II, 5.

Ten years later Othello dramatised himself as "one that loved not wisely, but too well." However, the role of Character has not been adequately

developed, in *Romeo and Juliet*. The Friar's plan (to provide room for the operation of Fate, in the interest of a series of theatrical situations) is made dramatically more important, more central to the disaster. Besides, Shakespeare could not give the young lovers the maturity, depth and stature which are the marks of truly tragic characters.

Something else is also lacking. A certain pattern of incidents and characters, however skilful, does not produce a tragedy. There must be a plane of tragic feeling and thought, an imaginative realisation of the forces and mysteries of life, a tragic vision of life. *Romeo and Juliet* is without this vision and vista. To organise the right relation between Fate and Character for presenting a tragic vision was beyond the capacity of the dramatist. So while the tragic conception of Character remains undeveloped, Fate remains external to feeling and thought. It appears only in action as a dramatic device for giving suitable turns to situations; it is never integrated into the universe of tragic experience. The deeper levels of tragic experience remain unexplored, and the play is simply packed with incidents and characters in a setting of quick action and compressed time. (*Romeo and Juliet* is good theatre; it is not a good tragedy.)

### III

It is not "the right point of view" to think of *Romeo and Juliet* only as a tragedy. In a sense, it is comedy made to move towards tragedy. Here is a transition producing a play which is the reverse of a tragi-comedy. Brooke's story has certainly a tragic design, but Shakespeare's treatment shows his interest in it also as the theme of a comedy. In fact, he seems to have experienced much delight in presenting the comic scenes which justify Johnson's remark: "His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct." (There is nothing like sustained tragic suspense in the play; there is always some hope for a happy ending. The lovers are by no means doomed characters, as in Racine's tragedies, and there is no necessary relation between the feud and the disaster. On the other hand, there are clear traces of comedy in the play, and had Shakespeare allowed his art to work freely, *Romeo and Juliet* would certainly have been one of his best romantic comedies, a thrilling drama of love and adventure.)

Most of the characters here qualify for appearance in a comedy, and nearly every unhappy situation could be given a happy turn. In the dance episode (which is a key situation) the feud is much less substantial than in *The Eve of St. Agnes*. There is a comic emphasis in spite of Tybalt's threat. Capulet seems to enjoy the dance, and, what is more, he likes Romeo:

And, to say truth, Verona brags of him  
To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth:—I, 5.

It seems as if he is quite willing to consider favourably a proposal from Romeo. It is not improbable that, even after a couple of deaths, had the secret marriage been made known to him, "all would have been well." In fact, there is nothing in the play to justify the strong bias which the Chorus seeks to create in the Prologue:

And the continuance of their parents' rage

Which, but their children's end, naught could remove.

On the other hand, there are situations and characters to indicate the possibilities of the play as a romantic comedy. Lawrence and the Nurse could be made excellent "accomplices", and the escape of a disguised Juliet could be made a thrilling episode. The elaborate plan (IV, 1) of the Friar miscarried mainly because it was too elaborate, and Juliet rashly agreed because she was desperate. But a much easier plan was to send her away immediately in disguise with Friar John to Mantua where she could join Romeo and be happy. Surely, the odds were much heavier against Keats's Porphyro and Madeline than against Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. As Shakespeare worked on Brooke's story, he found that his heart was not in tragedy; he was still under the spell of comedy. "Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy only by courtesy."

*King Lear* was found so painful that Tate boldly gave it a happy ending. In *Romeo and Juliet* the traces of comedy are so strong that a tragic end seems to be a forced one. The stage history of the play gives us at least one instance of bold alteration—Davenant's production of a version by James Howard who converted the play into a tragi-comedy. Genest mentions that it was "altered by James Howard so as to preserve Romeo alive and to end happily—it was played alternately as a Tragedy one day, and as a Tragi-comedy another, for several times together."

#### -IV

(Harrison writes: "He took great pains in the construction and worked out his play . . . with peculiar care." But an examination of the play shows that Shakespeare was not more than ordinarily careful. *Romeo and Juliet* has a comic opening quickly followed by the feud which, however, does not seem to be serious, especially after the Prince's warning. The spirit of romantic comedy appears with Romeo's ailment and Benvolio's remedy:

Be ruled by me, forget to think of her . . .

By giving liberty unto thine eyes;

Examine other beauties.

—I, 1.

When Benvolio urges Romeo to attend the dance in Capulet's house, we know that the feud is not a real threat. (The third and fourth scenes are pure comedy dominated by the Nurse and Mercutio respectively. The fifth



scene is both comic and romantic, and once again the feud is found to be unsubstantial. It seems as if Shakespeare, like Capulet, enjoys the dance so much that he does not want it to be disturbed by the feud. So he effects a compromise between the feud and the love-interest. But it would have been better for the play, had Tybalt kept his knowledge of the presence of Romeo a secret to himself and planned his move in a soliloquy. The First Act closes without any effective tragic hint, and the comic emphasis is clear.

The Prologue in the Second Act gives us the romantic pattern of love and opposition. The Act closes with the hasty and secret marriage of the lovers, and except for a few moments of uneasiness it is pure romantic comedy, with the Friar emerging as the controlling figure. The interest of the audience is kept alive, and once again the feud is kept in abeyance. There is even hope for reconciliation:

For this alliance may so happy prove,  
To turn your households' rancour to pure love.—II, 2.

As the Third Act opens, Mercutio is once again his brilliant self, but ✓ for the last time. There is a note of warning: "For now, these hot days, mad blood is stirring." Then in quick succession come deaths and banishment. Scenes 2 and 3 are pathetic, but again the Friar gives us hope:

Go, get thee to thy love, as was decreed . . .  
But look thou stay not till the watch be set,  
For then thou canst not pass to Mantua ;  
Where thou shalt live, till we can find a time  
To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,  
Beg pardon of the prince, and call thee back.—III, 3.

The fourth scene with its arrangement for a hasty marriage of Juliet with Paris heightens suspense because it places her in a desperate situation. Such an arrangement immediately after the death of Tybalt, Capulet's "brother's son", is, however, highly improbable, and a very weak explanation, as an afterthought, is offered in the Fourth Act (Scene 1):

And, in his wisdom, hastes our marriage,  
To stop the inundation of her tears ;

But the arrangement, though weakly motivated, is essential to the plot because it forces the Friar to suggest a desperate remedy which is the lay-out of the concluding part of the play. The fifth scene drags romantic drama down to the domestic level, and Capulet is given the role of a tyrannical father. The situation is now taut with suspense, but the first scene of the Fourth Act strikes a note of hope, when the Friar says: "Hold, daughter: I do spy a kind of hope." Then comes the elaborate plan, the weakness of which has been already pointed out. In the next scene Capulet

goes back to his comic role, and in the third scene Juliet drinks the "distilled liquor." The long speech is carefully prepared because the pattern of premonitions is made rather deceptive:

What if it be a poison, which the friar  
Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead . . .  
How if, when I am laid into the tomb,  
I wake *before* the time that Romeo  
Comes to redeem me?

The third premonition comes nearer to the truth with its touch of revenge supernaturalism:

O, look ! methinks I see my cousin's ghost  
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body  
Upon a rapier's point:—stay, Tybalt, stay !

✓ The fourth scene is pure domestic comedy, while the pathos of the fifth scene has no effect because we know that Juliet is not dead. The humour of the musicians is completely out of place.

In spite of Romeo's decision to commit suicide and Friar John's failure to deliver the important message the situation in the Fifth Act is not altogether hopeless because Friar Lawrence says: "Now must I to the monument alone." Then comes the last scene. Paris should have been spared; his appearance was not a necessity. It should be noticed how Shakespeare withdraws Lawrence for a moment to give Juliet an opportunity to stab herself. As the sad story is fully revealed the play ends on a note of reconciliation.

( Benvolio, Mercutio, Nurse, Capulet and Lawrence are all figures meant for a comedy, and there is nothing really tragic in or about either Romeo or Juliet. Again, the art of maintaining suspense and deceiving the audience for the last surprise is peculiarly suited to comedy. In fact, Shakespeare employs the art and materials of comedy to produce a tragedy. For the tragic effect he depends only on pathos, and he feels more at home in the world of comedy. But the comic element is at odds with the pathetic, and the result is a certain confusion in the aim of the dramatist. Tragedy has an art of its own, but the art of *Romeo and Juliet* is that of the romantic comedy of love and adventure; it is not the art of tragedy. )

## V

*Romeo and Juliet* shows clear marks of improvement in both characterization and construction—positive gains, no doubt. But equally remarkable is Shakespeare's handling of its verse. Rhyming and traces of sonnetteering are at times quite effective, but it is the blank verse which deserves special attention. It is not merely poetic; it is verse which is not to be only

recited ; it is to be acted. It is businesslike and efficient, making at times the use of prose quite unnecessary.

There is poetry in Juliet's verse when she says:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,  
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner  
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,  
And bring in cloudy night immediately.  
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,  
That runaway's eyes may wink, and Romeo  
Leap to these arms untalkt-of and unseen.—III, 2.

But listen to what the Nurse says:

Even or odd, of all days in the year,  
Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen.  
Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls !—  
Were of an age: well Susan is with God ;  
She was too good for me:—but, as I said,  
On Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen ; . . .  
'Yea', quoth he, 'dost thou fall upon thy face ?  
Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit ;  
Wilt thou not, Jule ?' and by my holidame,  
The pretty wretch left crying, and said 'Ay'.—I, 3.

The change here shows the flexibility of the verse. The use of speech-rhythm and the approximation of verse to prose not only produce humour but also make comic characterisation possible. The efficiency of this verse passage will be clear when we compare it with Shallow's reminiscences in prose in *Henry IV* 2 (III, 2).

For fluency and tension on a different plane here is Capulet's outburst:

God's bread ! it makes me mad: day, night, late, early,  
At home, abroad, alone, in company,  
Waking, or sleeping, still my care hath been  
To have her matcht . . .  
And then to have a wretched puling fool,  
A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,  
To answer—'I will not wed,—I cannot love,  
I am too young,—I pray you, pardon me ;'— . . .  
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me.—III, 5

#### REFERENCES

- H. B. Charlton : *Shakespearian Tragedy*.  
G. B. Harrison : *Shakespeare's Tragedies*.  
J. Genest : *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*.

## THE ART OF WILLIAM GOLDING

H. M. WILLIAMS

*Jadabpur University*

When the novel grew up, fiction was still in the long shadow of allegory, and what T. S. Eliot has called the dissociation of sensibility had not yet built an iron curtain between poetry and prose. In the eighteenth century, however, the novel became increasingly realistic, and the triumph of naturalism at the end of the nineteenth century seemed to put the seal of factual realism firmly upon the novel as an art-form. Yet it is doubtful whether the novel has ever freed itself from the umbilical cord of allegory. If its begetters were the Protestant Nonconformists, Bunyan and Defoe, then we are faced with the interesting idea that the novel began as mythology. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is nothing if not allegory; and Defoe's castaway has been recognised universally as a symbol of the human condition in this mysterious universe.

In the twentieth century, however, exhaustion of the realistic tradition and the disturbance of the orderly Victorian world by wars and revolutions brought about the rediscovery of the novel as myth. So Joyce came on the scene with his modern version of the *Odyssey*, and in *Finnegans Wake* went wholesale for multitude of meaning on the model of the medieval allegorists. On another plane Conrad created characters and explored themes which may be regarded as symbolic or archetypal though related to realistic fiction. The greatest bombshell was produced by a Czech Jew, Franz Kafka, whose novels, *The Castle* and *The Trial*, abandoned the realistic formula altogether for the symbolical and metaphysical. Yet in spite of the flutter which Kafka caused in the literary dove-cotes, nothing much came of his influence apart from the novels of Rex Warner.

It is interesting therefore to find the return to myth in the novels of a new writer. William Golding, a Cornishman, is a schoolmaster who served in the Navy in the last war—a fact worth mentioning in view of the seafaring background of his novels. After publishing a good deal of poetry he first attracted critical and even popular attention with his novel *Lord of the Flies* in 1954. *The Inheritors* followed a year later, *Pincher Martin* in 1956, and *Free Fall* in 1959. He has had one play, *The Brass Butterfly*, performed.

Golding's novels are original and disturbing. They would be so in any age; they were particularly so in the literary desert of the post-war world

when critics were speaking in hushed and reverent tones of the death of the novel in England. Golding's impact was, in Koestler's words, "an earthquake in the petrified forests of the English novel." (*The Sunday Times*).

Golding's four novels to date are very close together in theme, though dissimilar in plot and even in style. Every novel has at its core the theme of man's descent from innocence and life into corruption and death. Golding's theme is Bunyan's and Milton's: man's disobedience, sin and death, loss of Eden, and the painful process of redemption. Golding's handling of the theme, unlike that of the Roman Catholic writers Graham Greene and Francois Mauriac, is not sectarian. He is not specifically concerned with the problems arising from Christian beliefs, although his portrayal of man's predicament is in agreement with the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity and his view of life is theological; his novels are in fact religious fables, as we shall see in this article. But Golding seems to discover religious truth almost intuitively. He makes us touch and feel the corruption of man's nature instead of reasoning about it. If it is the nightmare side of man which he shows, nevertheless the nightmare is real. We flatter ourselves on our reason, our intellect, our urbanity, but we do not need a Freudian ghost to tell us that our paradise is a fool's paradise, that we nourish our own death, that pain and failure, cruelty and treachery are as real as benevolence and love, and indeed more real. It is this shocking truth that interests Golding as an artist, as a story-teller.

The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is "the loss of innocence", and it is embodied in a story suggested by Ballantyne's boy's classic *The Coral Island*. In an atomic war of the very near future, a plane carrying schoolboys is wrecked on a tropical island and only the boys survive. The leadership devolves upon a "natural leader", a generous and energetic boy called Ralph. He is helped by two boys, Piggy and Simon. Piggy is fat, short-sighted and asthmatic, a typical "townee" with plenty of commonsense. Simon on the other hand is "queer", a mystic and a "voyant". The boys are organised into building a signal fire; and authority and the rule of law is symbolised by a beautiful conch which is sounded to summon meetings. A disruptive element appears in the shape of Jack Merridew the prefect of a choir school. Already the leader of his own school, he challenges Ralph's authority, encouraging and leading the boys to engage in pig-hunting instead of tending the signal fire and building shelters. A ship passes the island without stopping because the signal has gone out. Jack's world begins to win over Ralph's.

"There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense." (p. 89). Piggy's commonsense and Ralph's strength of character are gradually worn

down by the fear and hatred engendered by the darkness and Jack's blood-lust. The boys fear a "Beast" which is said to stalk by night; and their fear becomes panic when a dead parachutist falls onto the mountain near the signal fire. This episode precipitates the destruction of the order established by Ralph and Piggy. Jack leads his gang of painted "savages" to hunt pigs. A sow's bloody head is stuck on a pole as an offering to the "Beast". This offering is the "Lord of the Flies."

Meanwhile Simon has been exploring the island on his own. He discovers the stinking corpse of the airman and runs down the mountain to tell the other boys the truth about the "Beast". But the hunters are engaged in a savage dance at the conclusion of the successful hunt. Simon is mistaken for the "Beast" and killed by the dance-maddened boys.

Jack and most of the boys established a fortress in the rocks. Ralph and Piggy go there to recover Piggy's spectacles stolen by Jack's gang. In the struggle Piggy is struck by a boulder, his body broken on the rocks below the "fortress", and the conch is destroyed with him. Finally Ralph is hunted over the island and his murder is averted only by the arrival of a Naval cutter to take the boys off the island. The angle of vision switches to the Naval officer who sees a gang of dirty long-haired boys engaged in "fun and games". Ralph and the boys weep.

Golding relates his dreadful story with great skill. His insight into the boy-mind, his ability to see through the senses and minds of adolescents, make this novel an imaginative tour-de-force. Golding makes the corruption of the island paradise, the ghastly descent into murder and savagery, seem inevitable so that the book has the authentic feel of tragedy. Golding is not for tender stomachs; he does not stint the horrors; he does not let us hide behind our sentimental illusions about human behaviour; he demolishes the whole Rousseauistic picture of the noble savage and the innocence of childhood. He can disturb us too by the vividness of his descriptive writing. Here is Simon's body lying on the sea's edge:

"The water rose further and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder became sculptured marble. The strange attendant creatures, with their fiery eyes and trailing vapours, busied themselves around his head. The body lifted a fraction of an inch from the sand and a bubble of air escaped from the mouth with a wet plop. Then it turned gently in the water.

"Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling; and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned. The great wave of the tide moved further along the island and the water lifted..." (p. 190).

Good though it is as a straight adventure story, *Lord of the Flies* has a deeper significance as a fable of the fall from innocence. In this myth Ralph, the good and sensible representative of human decency, stands midway between Piggy—the limited commonsense, rational point-of view, judging everything on the island by the standard of what the grown-ups would do—and Simon—the mystic, the poet, the dreamer, the symbol of the religious instinct. Both Piggy the rational and Simon the mystical are rejected and slaughtered by Ralph's dark opposite, the adventurous rebel, Jack Merridew with his blood-lust, his instinctive grasp of the need for ritual and blood-sacrifice, his appeasing of the wrath of the "Beast" by killing and savagery, his hunger for power over the empire of the island. The symbol of order and decency is the beautiful but frail conch which in the hands of Ralph, Piggy and Simon establishes a shaky temporary law rapidly destroyed by the glamorous counter-attraction of blood and adventure. The "Beast" dreaded by the boys is the objectification of their own evil; as Simon says: "May be it's only us." But whereas the little boys refuse to disbelieve in a real Beast, Piggy tries to deny the possibility of anything outside commonsense and what grown-ups would say and do. Ultimately it is only Simon who has the power to save the boys from themselves. Simon, the prototype of priest, prophet and saint, goes up the mountain like Moses and Christ, and there faces the evil and recognises that it springs from the heart of man. In the dialogue between Simon and the pig's head when Simon's fit is coming on, he seems to merge, to become one with the "Lord of the Flies", to take the burden of sin upon his own shoulders (see pp. 177—181), and like the saints and prophets his attempt to communicate religious truth to his people leads to his own death at their hands.

Golding's insight into the ambiguity of evil is shown in the incident of Jack's attempt to create the false paradise of the "fortress". This is supposed to protect Jack and his friends from their enemies—whereas the real enemy is inside them, inside the fortress all the time; and the fortress is also a symbol of death. In it and through it Piggy is killed and the conch shattered.

At the end Golding adopts a device which becomes his hallmark; he uses it in *Pincher Martin* and *The Inheritors*. He suddenly lets us see the tragedy through the bewildered eyes of an adult, the Naval officer who thinks the murder hunt is a game. The episode is full of irony. Hearing of the death of Piggy and Simon, the officer says:

"I should have thought that a pack of British boys... would have been able to put up a better show than that..."

Ralph says: "It was like that at first...before..." There is then borne

in upon Ralph's consciousness and ours the *real* tragedy of the island "paradise".

Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true wise friend called Piggy." (p. 248).

*The Inheritors* was Golding's second novel and in many ways his most ambitious. Again its theme is "the end of innocence", the impact of evil and guilt. Golding works it out in an original way. He takes us into the bodies and minds of Neanderthal Man and through the primitive animal-like awareness of a family of cave-dwellers we see, feel, touch, hear and smell the arrival of a new species—Homo Sapiens. The New Men with their tall foreheads, white skins, their art and science, their sophistication, bring disaster upon the Neanderthal people, for Homo Sapiens is not merely intelligent but (and because of his intelligence) capable of evil. The innocent primitive Lok is thus both attracted and repelled by the newcomers, the "Others". They live in a world of vivid glamorous experience beyond the ken of the ape-like Lok. They have art and alcohol and sexuality divorced from the natural rhythm of nature. They seem to be a miraculous people—and yet infinitely sinister.

For nine-tenths of the book we watch the catastrophic impact of the Others on the primitive people through the simple consciousness of the primitives themselves. It is a remarkable imaginative feat that Golding pulls off in creating a picture of the world as seen by people who think with their bodies. Lok and his people are sensuously alive in a way which the civilised man has utterly lost. Their intelligence is elementary and unlocalised. There is no room in their cramped skulls for brains; but their feet, their hands, the pores of their bodies, their nostrils, their ears—these are marvelously alive, reacting like sensitive antennae to the experiences the world gives to them...

"Over the sea in a bed of cloud there was a dull orange light that expanded. The arms of the clouds turned to gold and the rim of the moon nearly at the full pushed up among them. The sill of the fall glittered, lights ran to and fro along the edge and leapt in a sudden sparkle." (Pp. 42-43).

Nearly at the end of the book when the Others are leaving the island in panic terror of the red monsters (Lok and his people), Golding employs the device of the shift of vision which he used at the end of *Lord of the Flies*. Up to that point we have seen Men through the eyes of Lok. We now see Lok through the eyes of Men:

"It was a strange creature, smallish and bowed. The legs and thighs were bent and there was a whole thatch of curls on the outside of the legs and arms... The mouth was wide and soft and above the curls of the upper lip the great nostrils were flared like wings. There was no bridge to the



nose and the moon-shadow of the jutting brow lay just above the tip." (pp. 218-219).

The heart of the novel lies in the "aboriginal calamity", the gulf between the innocence of Neanderthal Man and the corrupt intelligence of Homo Sapiens. So innocent is Lok that when one of the Others threatens him with a bow, he thinks he is being offered a gift; and the Others bring with them the totally new experiences of alcohol and sexual debauchery. In theological language, the New Man represents Fallen Man, and the long dreadful road to the twentieth century, to concentration camps and atom bombs, is shown to start from the arrival of the intelligent and sinful creatures, our ancestors and brothers. For Lok their arrival spells doom. Robbed of his wife, child and innocence, he lies down to die of grief:

"It came close to the ashes and lay on its side. It pulled its legs up, knees against the chest. It folded its hands under its cheeks and lay still. The twisted and smoothed root lay before its face. It made no noise, but seemed to be growing into the earth, drawing the soft flesh of its body into a contact so close that the movements of pulse and breathing were inhibited." (p. 220).

Neanderthal Man can weep, can die of grief; but unlike Man cannot deliberately plan evil.

Golding's book was apparently suggested by his critical reading of Wells's *Outline of History*, which is quoted at the head of the novel. Wells suggested that Neanderthal Man survives in the folk-memory of Man as the mythological ogre of fairy-tale. Wells was confident that Man was an advance on the primitive and brutal creatures whose world he "inherited". Golding ironically reverses the view. It is Man who is vile. His predecessor had a simple innocence. The story of the Fall as related in the Bible, Genesis Chaps. 2 and 3, presents exactly the same point of view; for it is the Tree of Knowledge which is forbidden to Adam and its fruit leads to sin, sexuality and death.

*The Inheritors* is not least remarkable for the ambiguous attitude it forces upon its readers. While sympathising with Lok whose vision we share for most of the novel, we are nevertheless forced to recognise ourselves in the guilty Others. Lok is admirable and pitiable; but he is not Man. It is our glory and tragedy to belong to Lok's heirs.

In *Pincher Martin* Christopher Hadley Martin, nicknamed "Pincher" (a generic nickname for Martins in the Navy), a Naval officer in the last war, is on the bridge when his ship is torpedoed in the Atlantic. What follows may not be apparent on a first reading. In fact Martin dies in a matter of minutes and his body is tossed about in the waters of the Atlantic. His soul, his ego, refuses to accept the idea of its own death. From memo-

ries of Martin's past it picks out a decayed tooth once rooted in the living gum, and recreates it as a rock—"Rockall"—to which it clings enacting the dreadful hallucination of a castaway. That Martin is dead and that the events that follow take place in purgatory becomes clear only when you reach the last line of the book to learn that Martin's corpse still wears its sea-boots. You realise with something of a shock that the removal of the sea-boots was a purgatorial illusion: Compare page 10 and page 208.

For the rest of the book until the end of Part 13 we are identified with the character of Christopher Martin—a character that comes increasingly into focus as his ego struggles desperately against the compassion of God. The subsequent "events" fall into two groups; there are the Rockall hallucinations, a fiendish tragic parody of a castaway's attempt to keep alive, to make the rock a home, and to be rescued. (There is an interesting link here with *Lord of the Flies*). Second, there are the flashbacks to significant moments in Martin's life (a technique to be used again in *Free Fall*). Martin's nickname takes on a real meaning. He is a pincher—who steals anything his monstrous ego can get its claws on. His selfishness is expressed typically in the form of ravenous gluttony. Throughout his imaginary sojourn on the rock his mouth devours things: shell-fish, and even seaweed (See pp. 66, 74-75). Gluttony too symbolises his past as a living creature:

"He takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab. He's the cosmic case of the bugger who gets his penny and someone else's bun." (p. 120)

But Martin, an ogre of selfishness as he is, has been connected umbilically with God through his friend Nathaniel. Nathaniel is the spiritual antithesis of Martin. He surrenders his life to God; he is an object of Martin's love and hate. Friends in civilian life, they find themselves on the same ship in wartime, Martin an officer, Nat a rating. Nathaniel has married the woman Martin desires and in a fit of murderous rage he gives the order to alter the course suddenly in the hope that Nat will be pitched into the sea from the ship's side where he sits precariously during his rest periods. At that moment a torpedo hits them and the ship goes down. Ironically Martin records that the murderous helm-order was the correct one, though ineffectual, to avoid the torpedo.

In the Rockall fantasy Martin attempts to defeat his fate by exaggerating his already exaggerated egotism: a fat maggot devouring all the other maggots. "I'm damned if I'll die!" he cries against Nat's unspoken prophecy of his death (p. 72). "I am what I always was... I am Atlas. I am Prometheus." (pp. 76, 164) Unlike Nat who studies the technique of dying" Martin refuses to die. He does not believe in God but deludes

himself with his materialistic philosophy. He even rationalises his own death as an illness:

"I am poisoned. I am in servitude to a coiled tube the length of a cricket pitch. All the terrors of hell can come down to nothing more than a stoppage. Why drag in good and evil when the serpent lies coiled in my own body?" (p. 164) He tries to give his body an enema with the rubber tube of his lifebelt.

The climax of the novel: Martin's body rots while his ego seeks to employ it as an instrument of survival and devouring, dreading the black lightning which Nat earlier described as "heaven", the love of God. At last his soul reduced to a pair of claws like a parody of a sea-beast, Martin is face to face with the God who calls him not "Pincher" but Christopher (Christ-bearer). He screams his defiance:

"I spit on your compassion..... I spit on your heaven!"

The rock vanishes. Only the claws are left. The lightning closes over the ego of Pincher Martin:

"Some of the lines pointed to the centre, waiting for the moment when they could pierce it. Others lay against the claws, playing over them, prying for a weakness, wearing them away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy." (p. 201)

*Pincher Martin* is a prose-poem. The language has that sensuous quality which makes us aware of every nook and cranny, every edge and slope, all the pain and torture, of Martin's decaying rock-tooth. Some of the episodes have a bizarre, nightmarish quality. Golding strips away layer after layer of civilized flesh until the real man is exposed in all his nakedness. He can make us suddenly aware of the meanness, the filth, the horror of being human. He makes us forget for a while our pretensions and illusions and see ourselves as two-legged animals with lungs and brains and peristaltic intestines, all anchored to a sphere rolling through space around a sun and dragging with us the moon that pulls our seas. We see ourselves as God sees us: limpets clinging to a tiny rock in the Atlantic of the Universe still shrieking our defiance:

"I am Atlas. I am Prometheus."

The painful intensity of *Pincher Martin* results from its painful exploration of the centres of decay. It retells in the fable of the drowned sailor the dramatic struggle of evil against the merciless compassion of God.

*Free Fall*, the last of Golding's novels to date, is an allegory of the fall from paradise which is also the fall from freedom. The names of the characters and places suggest this theme. The hero is Samuel (called by God, see 1 Samuel, Chap. 3) who lives on Paradise Hill. He can make no

bridge between two concepts of life: the materialist-rational (later identified with the Science Master at his Grammar School) and the religious-spiritual (represented by a girl Beatrice whom he seduces, and Miss Pringle, a school-teacher who hurts and humiliates him).

The change from innocence to guilt occurs when he has a burst mastoid after the verger of the Church boxes his ears for spitting on the altar. While he is in hospital, his mother dies and he is adopted by a "queer" Anglo-Catholic clergyman. In the Grammar School where the priest sends him, his natural religious instincts are destroyed by the hostility of the religious teacher, Miss Pringle. He turns instead to the saintly rationalist, the Science Master. In school he discovers his vocation to be an artist. He also joins the Communist Party. Neither satisfies him. His fundamental hunger is for Goodness, for God.

This twist to his character leads him to a compulsive action, the result of the perversion of the finest instinct, love. He deliberately and cynically seduces the innocent Beatrice, and even more brutally abandons her to marry his Communist mistress, Taffy. Beatrice becomes an imbecile. Sammy goes into the Army in the War, becomes an officer, and is captured by the Germans. In a German P.O.W. Camp he is interrogated by a Nazi psychologist Dr. Halde who puts him into a blacked-out cell. There Captain Mountjoy suffers his "hell": self-discovery. Full realisation of his own guilt through being forced to relive the central episodes of his life after his "Fall" destroys the old Adam and he emerges in some way purged. (I do not find this part of the book at all clear). Dr. Halde has disappeared and the Prison Commandant apologizes for his treatment of Sammy:

"The Herr Doctor does not know about peoples."

As with all Golding's other novels, the ending is tantalisingly ironical.

This bare recital of the plot is itself a distortion of the essential theme which is revealed through hints, suggestions, undertones, ambiguities and ironies. In some ways it is the most mystifying of Golding's novels, although the theme of the fall from innocence and the possibility of rehabilitation through God's compassion comes out as clearly as it does in *Pincher Martin*.

The most important characters apart from Sammy Mountjoy are his mother, Beatrice, Miss Pringle, Nick Shales (Science Master), and Dr. Halde. His mother is a symbol of Nature, earthy, loving, dirty, poor. From this slum "Paradise", warm and affectionate and simple, Sammy is expelled by an act of sacrilege (spitting on the altar for a boyish "dare"). The verger's blow puts him in hospital where after his mother's death, he is adopted by the clergyman Father Watts-Watt who makes homosexual advances to-

wards him and then leaves him alone in a blacked-out bedroom; Sammy develops a neurotic fear of the darkness.

This sinister encounter with religion is repeated in Sammy's relationship with the teacher of religious knowledge, Miss Pringle, who misinterprets his genuine interest in religion, and humiliates him in an orgy of sarcasm. Sammy is vaguely aware that Miss Pringle is in love with Father Watts-Watt and regards him as her rival. With his faith in religion shattered, Sammy falls an easy victim to the loving charm of the Science Master, Nick Shales.

Nick, the son of a saintly cobbler, has inherited his father's character while deliberately rejecting the religion on which it was based. Sammy finds Nick's combination of goodness with enthusiasm for science (conceived in terms of naive rationalism) irresistible after the shocks administered by Father Watts-Watt and Miss Pringle. Reluctantly but inevitably Sammy deserts the burning bush of Moses, the cross of Christ, the universe of miracles and wonder, to enter the flat, practical world of Science as interpreted by Nick Shales.

Beatrice ("blessed") is a combination of Nick's goodness and Miss Pringle's piety. She is for Sammy Innocence personified. She has to be conquered for Sammy's peace of mind. His strategy of seduction is diabolical because it is a defilement of everything that is lovely, good, generous (and unprofitable in worldly terms). By seducing and then deserting Beatrice, Nick again "spits" on the altar of God.

Dr. Halde figures in the most complex part of the novel. He is a mysterious figure: psychologist, philosopher, torturer, Nazi and judge. He tries to get Sammy to betray his comrades who are planning to escape. He knows "everything" about Sammy, he tells him, and his "torture" consists of putting Sammy into a dark cell and in complete solitude. The darkness and his fear of it recall his life with Father Watts-Watt, and gradually the anaesthetized conscience comes back to pained life. He broods in anguish over his past seeking for the place where he fell. It is in the Beatrice episode that he finds the source of his corruption and the possibility of redemption. Beatrice has become an incurable imbecile and the most likely cause of this is Sammy. Nick's science is helpless to cure the soul that Sammy has defiled. With the memory of Beatrice's tragedy vividly recalled, Sammy sees Halde as a judge:

"Rising from my knees, holding my trousers huddled I walked uncertainly towards the judge." (p. 253)

Skillful use of flashback and dislocation of the time pattern give significance to the events instead of mere sequence so that the prison episode takes a central position at the climax of the book. The seduction of Beatrice and its tragic

aftermath straddle the prison episode; and while the catastrophic change in Sammy's life occasioned by the verger's blow is narrated before the prison scenes, the resultant events in the Grammar School are recalled in the nightmare of the blacked-out cell. This dislocation and deliberate disjunction of the temporal sequence not only help to point the theme, the Fall from Innocence, but give a poetic quality to the whole novel so that the events are seen as acting *simultaneously* upon the consciousness of the hero.

What is missing is the characteristic Golding device of the sudden shift of vision from the protagonist to the onlooker, although there is a hint of it in the final enigmatic words of the Commandant.

Vividness, poetry, a quality of acute sensuous perception, violence and terror,—these "Constants" of Golding's art are to be found in *Free Fall*. Golding is an adept at conveying not the experience of life (the naturalistic approach) but the interpretation of experience (the symbolist's approach). This is displayed poignantly in the seduction episode. Sammy wants Beatrice's subjection, her annihilation through sex, but he is cheated even of this, for even brutal selfish sexuality desires some reciprocation to be effective:

"No, said his body, no, not this at all. That was not the thing I meant, thing I wanted. How far was I right to think myself obsessed with sex when that potency which is assumed in all literature was not mine to use at the drop of a knicker? It seemed then that some co-operation was essential. If she were to make of herself a victim I could not be her executioner." (p. 117)

We see then that Golding uses the novel as the vehicle for myth and that his art is in some ways nearer to poetry than to prose. In fact for Golding there is no dissociation of sensibility. His prose is in the *best* sense of the word the prose of a poet. Every word counts; and there are layers of significance which, however, do not blur but rather intensify the meaning.

Golding has imaginative power of a high order. In *Lord of the Flies* we see the story through the acute animal-like senses of the boys; in *The Inheritors* we apprehend the world through the limited intelligence of the boys; in *The Inheritors* we apprehend the world through the limited intelligence of Neanderthal Man; *Pincher Martin* takes us inside the mind of the dying and the dead.

On a simple level we can enjoy Golding's books as brilliant adventures. On a deeper level however Golding is a painter of the heart of darkness, a poet of the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart. He makes us more aware, he deepens our sensibilities, he disturbs us. It is not only

the horror of man's plight that moves us but the memory of lost innocence, the pathetic longing for goodness, the pitiless compassion of God.

Golding demands our full attention as readers not only because of the hidden significance of episodes and phrases which only becomes apparent on re-reading but because careless reading can put us off the meaning altogether as in *Pincher Martin* where the sea-boats are crucial to the true reading of the novel.

Golding is free from the commonest influences of modern literature. Apart from boy's classics like *The Coral Island*, *Lord of the Flies* is like no other book that I know of. As a symbolist he owes nothing at all to Kafka.

He has the mark of the great literary artist: identity of theme and style. Each book seems to create its own style so that the language of *The Inheritors* moves to the sensuous animal-like rhythm of a prehistoric creature, and the style of *Pincher Martin* twists and shudders with the racked tormented soul. These are some of the reasons for the significant position that Golding occupies in contemporary English writing. The novel will never die as long as Golding is alive.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Golding's novels are published by Faber & Faber. I have referred to the Paperback editions except for *Free Fall* where I have used the first (hard-cover) edition (1959). The best critical account of Golding that I know of is Frank Kermode's article in *International Literary Annual*, No. 3.

## WORDSWORTH ON NATURE AND MAN

BINA SENGUPTA

G. C. D. Hindu Girls' College, Moradabad

We come across two factors if we try to find out the reason of the gradual shifting of importance by Wordsworth from the soul of Nature to the mind of Man in his nature poetry. The first is that Wordsworth must have felt dimly that what he saw with the bodily eye is in some sense created by the mind, and the second, that this idea grew in strength and clarity by his association with Coleridge, and through him, with a host of German philosophers, who initiated the Transcendental Movement. A most uncompromising account of the supremacy of the mind over matter, or rather the external world, has been given by Coleridge in his prose writings.

According to Coleridge, Nature should be regarded as subordinate to the spirit, for the former is bound up with the ideal forms of time and space, and as such, it cannot account for its own existence. The activities of spirit and will are self-originating and so these cannot depend on Nature. In short, the mind is free from matter and as such, it is responsible for its own action.

In Wordsworth's writings we do not get such a coherent view of the concept of mind. The reason is that Wordsworth's genius was essentially realistic, whereas Coleridge's just the reverse of this. The naturalistic vein was strong in the thought and feeling of Wordsworth. So he was first instinctively drawn to Hartley, whose theory of associationism seemed to have supplied him with a clue to the motive power of the universe. But as time went on he came to realise more and more clearly the supremacy of the mind over matter. Here begins his trouble, for he cannot give us a consistent view of Nature and Man. In 1802, Coleridge in his famous poem *Dejection: An Ode* deplores the loss of his power of appreciating Nature's beauty—beauty which was imposed upon her by his own soul. Probably addressing Sarah Hutchinson he says:

“O Lady ! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live.”

Let us compare this passage with one in *The Prelude*, written six years after *Tintern Abbey* and three years after Coleridge's Ode.

“So feeling comes in aid  
Of feeling, and diversity of strength  
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.”



Oh ! mystery of Man, from what depth  
 Proceed thy honours ! I am lost, but see  
 In simple childhood, something of the base  
 On which thy greatness stands, but this I feel  
 That from thyself it is that thou must give  
 Else never can receive".<sup>(1)</sup>

Does it not echo to a certain extent what Coleridge has said in his poem *Dejection: An Ode* ? So we can safely assume that by the time he resumed the composition of *The Prelude* in 1804, the influence of Coleridge and the German philosophers has already had a firm hold upon his mind. In this way he has shown in the later books of *The Prelude* how the great union of the mind of man and the soul of Nature was consummated. In *The Excursion* and the poems written at a later period of life, the power of the mind, which he calls imagination, is conceived by him to be still superior to the soul of Nature until alas ! he lost his visionary power he had in moments of intense joy in his communion with Nature, and along with it, his faith in the natural goodness of human beings expressed in the *Ode to Duty*. *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* and *The Ode to Duty* are the two poems which record the most poignant utterances of his soul for the loss of his mystical vision on the one hand, and of his faith in the natural goodness of man on the other.

There is a passage in *The Prelude* besides those in the "Intimation" Ode, which express the poet's concern over the loss of his visionary power:

"The days gone by  
 Come back upon me from the dawn almost  
 Of life: The hiding places of my power  
 Seem open ; I approach, and then they close ;  
 I see by glimpses now ; when age comes on,  
 May scarcely see at all ; and I would give,  
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,  
 A Substance and a life to what I feel:  
 I would enshrine the spirit of the past  
 For future restoration".<sup>(2)</sup>

In another poem, *Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty* published in 1818, he deplores the loss of the mystic vision which revives on rare occasions:

"Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light  
 Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored ;  
 Which, at this moment, on my waking sight  
 Appears to shine, by miracle restored ;

My soul, though yet confined to earth,  
Rejoices in a second birth !  
'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades ;  
And night approaches with her shades".

The "light" which was "full early lost and fruitlessly deplored" must be "the fountain-light of all our day" and the master light of all our seeing" of the "Intimation" Ode. His reference to it as being fruitlessly deplored must be the result of his changed religious views. By that date, that is 1818, he had already become an orthodox Christian, and could not support any more his own belief in prenatal existence, embodied in the "Intimation" Ode.

The first four stanzas of this great Ode were written in 1802, and the poem was not completed until 1803 or early 1804.<sup>(3)</sup> In 1802, the poem ended with

"Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?"

Here is a question to which the poet gives his own answer after having pondered over it for some time. It was the greatest problem of his life for which he himself could find no satisfactory solution. His explanation of the loss of his youthful joy in Nature has been embodied in the following lines:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home."

He tells us in his introductory note to the Ode that the shadowy notion of pre-existence expressed in it should not be taken too seriously by the reader, because it does not embody the poet's faith but was merely accepted by him at the time of writing, to turn it to best use he could for the purpose of poetic creation. The child, as he tells us, in the poem comes into the world with a spiritual endowment, which sheds the glory of the divine upon the objects of Nature. In this poem we find that Nature has already been relegated to a place of secondary importance. It is rather the mind or the imagination of the child which invests all objects with a divine glory. When the child grows into a youth, he still retains the visionary power of the soul, which bestows glory on the objects of Nature, because he is still near his divine source. But gradually as he grows older and occupies himself with mundane interests, this "master-light" "fades into

the light of common day". As in *Tintern Abbey* Nature is still said to be the child's loving nurse, but her function seems to have been changed. Here

"The homely nurse doth all she can  
To make her foster-child, her inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came".

But in *Tintern Abbey* the same nurse has been said to help the child visualise divine glory as she is "The guide, the guardian of my heart and the soul of all my moral being". In *The Prelude* too, stress is laid on what a child receives from Nature. The sharp contrast between what man brings from God and what the earth does to make him forget his divine origin is the theme of the "Immortality" Ode. I think, in this poem we have an expression of Wordsworth's farewell to the Hartleian theory. What he means to say here is that on account of our divine origin, we possess more of the divine nature in our childhood than in later years, whereas according to Hartley, the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa* on which impressions are made by the external world through sensations, and in this way, as the child grows to manhood, higher and still higher thoughts are developed. The process is just the reverse in this case. Nature is considered in this poem not as a means of developing the soul, enabling it to realise divine glory, but as a means of alienating it more and more from that glory.

A few words may be said regarding the pre-natal existence which the poem suggests. Wordsworth's own comments on the subject are found in the following note written by him:

"A pre-existent state has entered into popular creeds of many nations; and among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the immortality of the Soul, I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet".<sup>(4)</sup>

Speaking about human beings in general Wordsworth remarks:

"But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home".

The above lines from the poem presuppose a belief that we existed in some other region before we were born in this world. In spite of the poet's explanatory note on the subject, he has often been criticised for the expression of an unchristian belief in the poem. It is an accepted belief in most

religions that the soul of man is immortal, which signifies that it exists before a person is born and shall also exist after his death. If it is understood in this sense, Wordsworth's theory of pre-natal existence should not appear entirely incompatible with the ideas of Christianity, and Wordsworth, too, ought not to have felt sensitive about the criticisms on this point.

It is not true to hold that Wordsworth did not compose any poem on Nature after this date. He upheld the claim of Nature and Solitude in promoting spiritual life to the end, and we find references to her in his later poetry as the manifestation of God, but we do not feel in the later work the vibrations of her heart as we do in the poetry of the great decade.

We shall now conclude the discussion regarding the reasons for Wordsworth's loss of his mystic vision along with the loss of his poetic power. His poetry failed because his mystic vision failed, and his mystic vision failed because Nature failed to move him in the way she did at an earlier period in his life.

Many reasons have been given to explain this falling-off. I shall notice only a few of them. Sir Herbert Read, for example, is of opinion that Wordsworth allowed moral judgment to clog his poetic sensibility (as in *Laodamia*), which accounts for the gradual decay of his poetic power. "Either there was", he writes, "no spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of any kind—just mere prose rhetoric, or the feelings were crossed by the poet's own inhibitions, and thus reduced to confusion".<sup>(5)</sup>

I do not however, find this explanation satisfactory. If the feelings were "crossed by the poet's own inhibitions", this should have been much more evident during the period 1798-1808, the most fruitful of his poetic career as the memories of the incidents in his life in France with reference to Annette must have been fresher then than they were at a later date when his poetical powers declined.

Some attribute the change to his alienation from Coleridge. A poem entitled *A Complaint*, written in 1806 by Wordsworth is quoted by Professor Garrod in support of this view.<sup>(6)</sup>

"There is a change—and I am poor.  
Your love hath been, nor long ago,  
A fountain at my fond heart's door  
Whose only business was to flow; . . .  
Now, for that consecrated fount  
Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,  
What have I? Shall I dare tell?  
A comfortless and hidden well."

Wordsworth is poorer, he says, "not only in the wealth of the affections, but in the riches of philosophic thought".<sup>(7)</sup> "The withdrawal of his influ-

ence", he says again, "carried with it, for Wordsworth, not only, as I think, philosophic impoverishment, but a kind of relapse into ordinariness".<sup>(8)</sup>

I have already indicated my view on the question and I shall state it again. The strength of Wordsworth as a poet lay in his mystic vision, which was evoked by natural objects. When he came more and more under the influence of Coleridge and the German philosophers, Nature failed to give this vision, as she came to be regarded as a passive force, and for Wordsworth the importance began to shift from Nature to the mind of man. Referring to this power of the mind the poet says:

"...and I remember well  
That in life's everyday appearances  
I seem'd about this period to have sight  
Of a new world, a world, too, that was fit  
To be transmitted and made visible  
To other eyes, as having for its base  
That whence our dignity originates,  
That which both gives it being and maintains  
A balance, an ennobling interchange  
Of action from within and from without,  
The excellence, pure spirit, and best power  
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees."<sup>(9)</sup>

I think, it was due to Coleridge's influence that Wordsworth ceased to worship Nature, and with the loss of this attitude, he lost his mystic vision as the fountain-head of his creative genius. In the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* Wordsworth has given his own reasons for the loss of this vision which I believe are at least partly true. Though "a six years' darling of a pigmy size" may not be "a mighty prophet", "Seer Blest", as Wordsworth would have us believe, there is a certain amount of truth in his saying that a child is nearer to God than grown-up people. Saints teach that the glory of child-life is simplicity, innocence, and purity of heart. Worldliness stands in the way of having a true vision of God. But as we grow up, we become more and more worldly-minded, losing thereby the purity of our hearts. Wordsworth's childhood was extraordinary in many ways. Up to the age of seventeen he had lived almost in daily communion with Nature far from the contamination of artificial society. As such, outward influences could not destroy the purity of the manifestations of Nature. For a few years after this period, his sense of the supernatural lay suspended in him on account of the preoccupations with politics, the problems of profession, and other matters. When he found time again to seek the heart of Nature, the visionary power was revived; for the external world, though it enlarged his experience, did not rob him of his essential purity and innocence. It

was after a few years that the hardening process set in and the "regular action of the world"<sup>(10)</sup> left its mark upon him.

There was a Northern canniness in his nature which was observed by a few of his contemporaries. And in his relations with Coleridge he became shrewder and colder day by day and also self-centred and arrogant. "The real truth is that" writes Sir Herbert Read, "there has rarely been a poet who reacted so violently to the criticisms directed on his poems. He poured scorn on any reviewer who ventured to question his greatness, his equality with Milton, his perfect felicity and moral effectiveness".<sup>(11)</sup> How is it possible for a person who is so full of vanity and so conscious of his own power to have mystic visions? God is attainable, so all religious founders say, through humility and love. We do not notice these qualities in Wordsworth's later life, at any rate, in his relation with society. The same coldness that he exhibited towards Coleridge, we are told, was shown also to De Quincey when he invited the Wordsworths to his house after his marriage <sup>(12)</sup>. Love for humanity in general he had none, and his love for Nature, too, died out under the influence of the Transcendental philosophy. So the mystic vision faded away and the poetic muse could do little without its aid.

One or two words may be said in connection with his *Ode to Duty*, as this poem, in a different way, represents the same phase of Wordsworth's life as the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, that is, his concern over the loss of faith in the natural goodness of man. In his later life Wordsworth regarded the power of mind or the imagination as more important than the senses to which the objective world made its appeal. Similarly in the *Ode to Duty* he tells us that duty should take the place of natural virtue. But to the word 'duty', he gives a new significance. It is not merely the reasoning faculty, cold and calculating, for which he has no respect at all. His address to "Duty" as

"Thou dost wear  
The godhead's most benignant grace;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face",

takes us from the region of cold reason into that of pure imagination,

"there are who ask not if thine eye  
Be on them; who in love and truth  
Where no misgiving is, rely  
Upon the genial strength of youth".

Here he does not seem to have abandoned the doctrine that the highest moral achievement is a part of our natural life. But if it fails us as he felt that it was failing him, duty is the second best. People will seek her

firm support, he says, according to their need. Moreover he links duty, which is a law of the moral world, to the physical law in nature:

"Flowers laugh before thee on their beds  
And fragrance in their footing treads;  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,  
And the most ancient heavens, through thee,  
Are fresh and strong."

Here duty is said to be setting a standard of life not only for the moral world but for the natural world as well. The two worlds did not appear to him to be antithetical to each other. Similarly, in the *Rainbow* poem he says:

"And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety".

Here the poem takes us from the natural to the moral world. But the very use of the words "I could wish" suggests that he has already been feeling a loss of his former faith in Nature and the natural goodness of man. He needed some external support which he found in imagination on the one hand and duty on the other.

---

#### REFERENCES

1. The Prelude, xi, 326-334. Moorman: Wordsworth, p. 529.
2. The Prelude, xi, 335-343.
3. P.W. IV pp. 464-5. F. W. Bateson: Wordsworth.
4. P.W. IV. p. 464 (I. F. Notes)
5. H. Read: Wordsworth, p. 149.
6. H. W. Garrod: Lectures & Essays, pp. 137-8.
7. Ibid., p. 138.
8. Ibid., p. 140.
9. The Prelude, xii, 368-79.
10. Ibid., ii, 380.
11. H. Read: Wordsworth, p. 153.
12. Ibid., p. 152.

## REVIEWS

University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers.

This series of pamphlets issued by the University of Minnesota is published under the editorial supervision of William Van O'Connor, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren. The first of the series was a critical study of Ernest Hemingway by Philip Young. Each pamphlet is just under fifty pages in length. The print and paper are of a high standard; the cover is attractively coloured having slight, though elegant, designs, and each pamphlet has a different colour scheme. Nearly a dozen pamphlets, so far published, thus form a colourful possession; the brightness of the contents within, their intellectually stimulating quality, is forestalled by this method but the nature of the entertainment is not perhaps precisely indicated. For the orange colour scheme chosen for Gertrude Stein does not clearly establish a correspondence between it and the career of this eccentric genius. We must, therefore, desist from seeking a symbolic value in the colour and accept it merely as decoration, as something to brighten our homes with.

*T. S. Eliot* by Leonard Unger.

This short study contains new material, or at least material not incorporated in more voluminous books of criticism, and offers views and comments, both refreshing and illuminating. One enjoys reading it, for almost at every point the author gives a new turn to the familiar, so as to represent it in a more interesting light. T. S. Eliot's statement made at an interview held in New York some 4 years ago is not generally known, and is perhaps in need of explanation before it is fully understood: "I'd say that my poetry has obviously more in common with my distinguished contemporaries in America, than with anything written in my generation in England. That I'm sure of." The sentence is not clear because of the word "obviously" and because of the confused syntax comparing his poetry with "distinguished contemporaries in America". The inference from this seems to be that the spirit of his poetry more definitely reaches American life than the English, and this may, however, be only obvious, the real fact being something different. Here there is no suggestion that the art he practises is practised in America, or that he owed anything to the example of his American contemporaries. Mr. Unger has very succinctly stated the contradictions in Eliot's poetry and criticism: "His criticism urged a program of the classical, the traditional, and the impersonal, while he was



producing a poetry which is poignantly romantic, strikingly modernist, and intensely personal" (p. 7). Mr. Unger's annotations are revealing: "This early poem ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock") records the distraction and dejection produced by the "procession. . . of Sunday faces", by the social routines of the day and the sordid aspects of an urban alley, and then ends with a personification of "Life" as a balding and graying man, fastidiously attired and mannered, waiting with self-conscious correctness as a social caller upon the "Absolute". But "Prufrock" is also related to the "Portrait" and "Conversation Galante." The poem opens with the promise "To lead you to an overwhelming question..." and this question is not so much an interrogation as a problem—the problem of communication between a man and a woman." (p. 9).

Mr. Unger states that Eliot's "sustained preoccupation has been with 'the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling'" (p. 14) and it is in these last words, given within quotation marks, that he discovers the true import of the famous "objective correlative" defined in "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919). Perhaps Mr. Unger's rendering is not a case of oversimplification, and the puzzling phrase will at least mean more to most people when thus presented.

The pamphlet contains at the end a select list of reading as one of its useful features. Short though it is, its significance must not be judged in terms of its length, for within its brief compass it offers a view of Eliot's poetry and drama, which will afford valuable guidance to readers interested in the subject.

*Gertrude Stein* by Frederick J. Hoffman.

Mr. F. Hoffman is a professor of modern literature at the University of California, Riverside, and has published a number of books on the literature of our times. His attempt to present the ideas and literary experiments of Miss Stein reveals an analytical mind having a grasp of the subtleties of exposition and a capacity for precise formulation of views. Miss Stein is, however, an eccentric genius: the infinite gyrations of her words within the area of a single meaning would place her poles asunder from William James with his theory of consciousness as a stream or flux. Her work will remain as a curiosity of literature, in this respect offering a parallel to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*; the latter, however, will be somewhat more widely read in the 47 pages of T. S. Eliot anthology giving the episodes of *The Mooks* and *The Gripes* and *Anna Livia*. Miss Stein's play with words may be a testimony to her inventiveness but inventiveness on such a scale taxes our patience beyond endurance. The following passage is a specimen of her mannered expression: "She was quite regularly gay. She told many then

the way of being gay, she taught very many then little ways they could use in being gay. She was living very well, she was gay then, she went on living then, she was regular in being gay, she always was living very well and was gay very well and was telling about little ways one could be learning to use in being gay, and later was telling them quite often, telling them again and again". ("Miss Fur and Miss Skeene" in *Geography and Plays*).

This static manner has, however, roots in American life, and seems at the same time to be the obverse of a world, developing supersonic speed and fast achieving the conquest of space. Robert E. Spiller's *Literary History of the United States* (The Macmillan Company. New York, 1955) throws some light on Miss Stein's practice, which suggests that in developing her manner, she did not forget American usage: "...it is interesting to notice that the cadences of Miss Stein's writing, mannered and self-conscious as they were and eventually pointing toward a sort of literary cubism or post-impressionism, had curious echoes of Midwestern talk". (p. 1297)

Miss Stein's *Three Lives* has been ranked as a minor classic. Other works which deserve mention are *The Making of Americans*, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, *Paris France*, *Picasso*, and *The Geographical History of America*. Mr. Hoffman has invested Miss Stein with a threefold character as effective matron of American letters, expatriate mistress of ceremonies and theorist of language and literature. Miss Stein's newness of outlook is unquestionable but the whole of our life, represented by modes of speaking and thinking, cannot be adjusted to it without an abnormal slowing down of the tempo of our existence. But if the repetitive style is contrary to our normal ways, it may prove its value as a means of analysing character, and to this extent its introduction into a work of imagination may be valid. But even an ardent enthusiast may find it difficult to swallow it as Mr. Hoffman is ready enough to admit: "even more tolerant contemporaries found her work wearisomely formless, and offensively coy" (p. 6).

Mr. Hoffman's treatment of the questions, which Miss Stein's literary career involves, is sympathetic and at the same time, discerning. The pamphlet maintains the high standard of its predecessors. It would help foreign readers if companion pamphlets were also published as anthologies of prose and poetry for introducing the authors dealt with in these short critical studies.

*Wallace Stevens* by William York Tindall.

Published in 1961, this booklet of 47 pages is advertised as the last of the pamphlets to be issued on American writers. The author, Professor Tindall of Columbia University, can claim more readers in this country than his subject. For poetry of the obscure kind he writes, in

spite of rich sensibility, must leave the general body of readers cold. On the other hand, Professor Tindall's introduction to modern literature creates new interest and provides guidance, showing how it can be pleasurably pursued.

Born in 1879 Wallace Stevens did not publish anything in book-form until he was forty-four. The isolation of the American artist which gives rise to diffuseness of structure and inconclusiveness of thought seems to have hampered Stevens more than any other poet of his time. Yet the position of Stevens in his country is high, and Frank Kermode tells us that he "has come to be more widely read" in England. Stevens's conception of a poem, as Kermode shows, is related to the school of Mallarme: it is autotelic or in other words: "a poem should not mean but be". Stevens's themes are limited. He seems to eschew love as a subject, and is concerned with the nature of reality, on which he often writes with the earnestness of a questing spirit.

One of his most characteristic poems is "Anecdote of the Jar", "a jar, a shape made by man and placed by him in a 'slovenly wilderness'":

Part of the *res* and not itself about it.  
The poet speaks the poem as it is,  
Not as it was.

There is evidently a kind of relationship between man's handiwork and nature with the implication that neither the one nor the other is enough, but the treatment has not been made in a generally acceptable form and hence an American critic has recently dismissed it as "absurd".

Stevens has worked for an insurance firm. Most poets would have in the situation thought of themselves as a square peg in a round hole. But Stevens viewed this prosaic association approvingly: "It gives a man character as a poet to have daily contact with a job". Another opinion which he has expressed seems to betray the philistine mind: "Money is a kind of poetry". Stevens often assumes the role of a dandy in his poetry, displaying the unreal of what is real and the real of what is unreal. The element of gaiety seems inseparable from his character and work, and is never choked by the serious qualities, which seem to co-exist in a way we also notice in Ronald Firbank and Aldous Huxley.

His vocabulary is without a modern, colloquial flavour. While in our time, the main poetical trend has been to re-establish a connexion with speech-accents, Stevens has chosen to travel in the opposite direction. Professor Tindall gives the different kinds of word material found in the poetry of Stevens: "archaisms, foreign intrusions, neologisms, and insolent hoo-oos" (p. 15). One example showing the difficulty felt in understanding his poetry will conclude our remarks. One Ice-Cream Association in America, com-

pletely puzzled by the obscurity of the poem "The Emperor of Ice-Cream", wrote to the poet "asking if he was for ice cream or against it". Stevens knew well that he must depend on the judgment of the *elite* and not on that of the common reader. He is by the former judged "one of America's finest poets".

"The Emperor of Ice-Cream" must not raise in our mind any expectation of the delectable manufacture, enjoying such popularity in America. It is merely an allegory and it provides apt images for life and death; the opposite qualities of the ordinary and the festive, the cold and agreeable show the nature of the contrasting pair.

The little brochure concludes with a list of select reading, which will prove valuable in planning further studies.

L. H.

---

# BULLETIN

*Department of English : Calcutta University*

## CONTENTS

Vol.I: 1: 1959

Vice-Chancellor N. K. Sidhanta ... Foreword

- S. N. Roy ... One More Truth About Rosetti ✓  
A. G. Stock ... An Abstract of Aristotle's Theory of Poetry

### *Interpretations*

- S. C. Sen ... Gulliver's Travels  
Gerontion  
K. D. Bose ... The Right Reading of Poetry  
'Contributor' ... The Waste Land

### *Recent Books*

- S. C. Sen ... The Business of Criticism  
The Sovereign Flower  
Pope and Human Nature ✓  
The Third Voice  
The Vision of Tragedy

### *Notes and Comments*

Vol. I: 2: 1960

- S. K. Das ... The Origin of the English Language  
B. Chatterji ... The Tower  
M. K. Sen ... What is Modern in Modern Poetry  
S. C. Sen ... Tintern Abbey  
The Scholar Gipsy

*News and Views*

Vol. I: 3: 1960

- |                  |     |     |                                                                                           |
|------------------|-----|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| S. C. Sen        | ... | ... | Shakespeare's Art of Comedy<br>The Art of Daniel Defoe<br>G. B. S. and 'Arms and the Man' |
| K. D. Bose       | ... | ... | Shelley's Skylark                                                                         |
| A. Deb Chowdhuri | ... | ... | Barker's 'Waste'                                                                          |
| A. D. Mukherji   | ... | ... | An Apology for 'King Lear'                                                                |

*Interpretations*

- |           |     |     |                       |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----------------------|
| S. C. Sen | ... | ... | Othello,<br>Byzantium |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----------------------|

*Book Review*

- |           |     |     |                      |
|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------|
| S. C. Sen | ... | ... | Anatomy of Criticism |
|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------|

Vol. II: 1 & 2: 1961

- |             |     |     |                                              |
|-------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------|
| A. G. Stock | ... | ... | <u>Wordsworth, Nature and the Revolution</u> |
| P. C. Ghosh | ... | ... | Poetic Drama and 'Murder in the Cathedral'   |
| S. K. Sen   | ... | ... | Joseph Warton and the Romantic Heresy        |
| S. C. Sen   | ... | ... | Richardson and Fielding                      |

*Interpretations*

- |           |     |     |                                                          |
|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|
| S. C. Sen | ... | ... | On First Looking into Chapman's Homer<br>The Good Morrow |
|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|

*Book Reviews*

- |              |     |     |                                                                                                    |
|--------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| S. C. Sen    | ... | ... | The Literary History of the United States<br>Capell and Malone and Modern Critical<br>Bibliography |
| K. C. Lahiri | ... | ... | Literary Criticism                                                                                 |

*Notes and Comments*

Vol. II: 3 & 4: 1961

- |               |     |     |                                        |
|---------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------|
| A. G. Stock   | ... | ... | Othello's Occupation                   |
| S. C. Sen     | ... | ... | Aldous Huxley: A Case of Dissociation? |
| P. C. Ghosh   | ... | ... | Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida'   |
| Bina Sengupta | ... | ... | <u>The Natural Piety of Wordsworth</u> |

*Interpretations*

✓ S. C. Sen ...

... Her Vision in the Wood  
Sailing to Byzantium

*Notes and Comments*

*Book Reviews*

L. H. ...

... Robert Graves  
• Henry James  
A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional  
English

Vol. III: 1 & 2: 1962

S. C. Sen

... Four Quartets

P. C. Ghosh

... Samson Agonistes

Bina Sengupta

... Wordsworth's Nature Poetry

M. K. Sen

... The Political Writings of Robert Lynd

Subhash Sarkar

... Imagery in Eliot's Poetry

L. H. ...

... Reviews: *W. B. Yeats*; *Walt Whitman*